

JANUARY 1955

TWO SHILLINGS NET

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL



BANK OF SCOTLAND



A Banking Service to the people of Scotland since 1695.

There are Branches throughout Scotland ready to attend to all your Banking requirements.

AFFILIATED BANK
THE UNION BANK
OF SCOTLAND LIMITED

CHAMBERS'S DICTIONARY CROSSWORD No. 8 (December)

SOLUTION

Across : 1, Game cock ; 5, Hearth ; 9, Exclaim ; 10, Stipple ; 11, Newlyweds ; 12, Arras ; 14, Hurrah ; 16, Werewolf ; 19, Effigies ; 20, Prayer ; 22, Edict ; 24, String bag ; 26, Amnesty ; 27, Cobbles ; 28, Hoyden ; 29, Greyness.

Down : 1, Green cheese ; 2, Macaw ; 3, Crazy gang ; 4, Camber ; 6, Eliza ; 7, Repertory ; 8, Hue ; 10, Sister ; 13, Suffragists ; 15, Ruffianly ; 17, Errand boy ; 18, Jersey ; 21, Grocer ; 23, Taste ; 25, Bilge ; 26, Ash.



Kelvin

MARINE ENGINES

DIESELS

Full Diesel engines—four-stroke, compression-ignition, solid injection, in a range of eight models from 22 to 132 H.P.
Comply with Lloyd's and Board of Trade requirements.

RICARDOS (PETROL/PARAFFIN)

In a range of powers from 7½ to 30 H.P.
All Kelvin engines can be supplied with full marine equipment.

The Bergius & Co Ltd
DOBBIE'S LOAN — GLASGOW C.4

AN ASSOCIATED BRITISH ENGINEERING COMPANY

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Contents—January 1955

	PAGE
THE LOVE STORY OF THE CHEF DE BATEAU	<i>D. Manners-Sutton</i> 1
FOX TRYST (Poem)	<i>Egan Mackinlay</i> 7
PREHISTORY IN PEAT	<i>A. J. Forrest</i> 8
THE SNARING OF PTARMIGAN	<i>Henry Tegner</i> 11
RICHES (Poem)	<i>H. R. Daffin</i> 12
YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN	<i>Langston Day</i> 13
OUT OF THE DEEP (Poem)	<i>Wilfrid Thorley</i> 16
THE GREAT GUN TRICK	<i>Henry Ellenson</i> 17
THE WOOD-BURNERS	<i>A. Anderson</i> 19
DAWNWARD BOUND (Poem)	<i>Anne Philip Smith</i> 21
SECOND VOYAGER	<i>Captain Frank H. Shaw</i> 22
WHY? (Poem)	<i>James MacAlpine</i> 26
MEMORIES OF MALAYA	<i>Sacha Carnegie</i> 27
THE CURSE OF NOISE	<i>William Wintersett</i> 30
THE DANCING DOLL	<i>Margaret Bailey</i> 33
MYSTERIES OF NAVAL SLANG	<i>A. C. Rose</i> 35
THE TANKER	<i>Roy Faulkner</i> 37
A HOUSEMASTER'S CASE-BOOK: VII.—Gordon Feather	<i>Everett Barnes</i> 39
LOST SUMMER (Poem)	<i>Mary M. Gilmore</i> 44
TREES THAT FIGHT RAIL FIRES	<i>Basil Fuller</i> 45
OH PRESENT TIME (Poem)	<i>Ailsa Cambridge</i> 46
TWICE-TOLD TALES: XLIX.—The Island Julia	47
IN BROAD DAYLIGHT	<i>Ebrock Valdross</i> 48
THE CHAIRT (Poem)	<i>Wendy Wood</i> 55
MRS BRIGGS TAKES A LODGER	<i>R. H. Ferry</i> 56
MILK SUPPLY AND THE PUBLIC ANALYST	<i>M. J. Robb</i> 59
SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE—Rot-Proofing Sacks. Stronger Hammers and Hatchets. A Wine-Cooler. Easing the Wash. A Garden Sweeper. A Pocket-Size Recording-Machine. An Improved Ironing-Board. Better Curtain-Rails. An Improved Paperhanging Adhesive. New Food Preservatives. Unpickable Locks? A Low-Standing Domestic Stove	61
BUYING YOUR VEGETABLE SEEDS	<i>W. E. Shewell-Cooper</i> 64

Illustrations by Ridgway

TO CONTRIBUTORS—All communications should be addressed to:

'The Editor, Chambers's Journal, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2.'

Manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or by stamps or their equivalent (postal order or imperial or international reply coupon).

Annual subscription, including postage, home or abroad: 26/6 (except Canada, 26/-).

Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post.

Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2, and 6 Dean Street, London, W.1.

Agents for Advertisements:

England—T. B. BROWNE, LTD., 117 Piccadilly, London, W.1;

Scotland—JOHN MENZIES & CO. LTD., Glasgow and Edinburgh, 534 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, C.3.

Part 1, January 1955.

P 1

CHAMBERS'S DICTIONARY

CROSSWORD No. 9

ACROSS

- 1 Music for April 1st? (two words : 4, 5).
- 6 Greek pigeon? (5).
- 9 Material that should be easy to mould (7).
- 10 Down to earth or aspic (7).
- 11 Take morbid matter to a witch (9).
- 13 Maybe the work of 6 across (4).
- 15 He settles down, not up (8).
- 17 Of social significance (5).
- 19 One aspect of shape (5).
- 20 Does he see more than the Referee? (8).
- 22 Goes home when hit on head (4).
- 23 Heavenly hanger-on (9).
- 25 A shilling in front of this fork would make it noisy (7).
- 28 Number one gallery for salt (7).
- 29 Taken from a tree, by gum? (5).
- 30 Descriptive of a plant with knobs on (9).

DOWN

- 1 Spot penny fruit (6).
- 2 Rousing, like the Marines (5).
- 3 Mr Bryant or Mr May in romantic mood? (two words : 5, 5).
- 4 About quotations for speaking verses (11).
- 5 Boney fruit (3).
- 6 Outlaw's cape (4).
- 7 A steep mat (anag.) . . . in bread (two words : 4, 5).
- 8 The object of playing Ducks and Drakes (8).
- 12 Sounds like shores of the Red Sea, though located in India, according to the hymn (two words : 5, 6).

Composed by JOAN BENYON

14

DOWN (contd.)

- 14 The prettiest pupil, one hears, though educationally sound (two words : 6, 4).
- 16 I squeal it (anag.) (9).
- 18 Miss (8).
- 21 Hang here, one more letter and you go off from here! (6).
- 24 Unfit for a pint (5).
- 25 Vegetable you shouldn't be without (4).
- 27 Paleface needs it (3).

Three prizes of books from Chambers's catalogue to the value of ten shillings and sixpence each will be awarded to the senders of the first correct solutions opened.

Entries must arrive not later than the 15th January.

Envelopes should be clearly marked CROSSWORD in the top left-hand corner.

The closing date unavoidably confines the entry to those resident in Great Britain, N. Ireland and Eire.

Supreme
for
Crosswords

CHAMBERS'S
TWENTIETH CENTURY
DICTIONARY

Entries to W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 THISTLE STREET, EDINBURGH 2



'active service' underwear

Freedom of movement is essential : Chilprufe's soft, close-knit fabric does not restrict nor chafe. Freedom from colds and chills is even more important : Chilprufe's finest Pure Wool Underwear offers unrivalled all-weather protection. And to set the seal of perfection on this most desirable of underwear, there is lasting comfort, fit, and immaculate appearance.

Chilprufe for men

Ask your Chilprufe Agent or write for **ILLUSTRATED FOLDER.**

CHILPRUFE LIMITED LEICESTER



Barbour **WEATHERPROOFS**

In Fawn or Bronze Beacon Gabardine, lined check; men's and ladies' well-cut models in all normal sizes, prices from 105/-

Fine Beavers, Oilskins, men's from 95/-, ladies' from 75/-

Stout Black Oilskin coats for work wear from 55/-

Dark Green Beacon Thornproofs—the toughest and hardest-wearing waterproof made—from 117/-

Waterproof Clothing of all kinds. Send for 52-page Catalogue, full of comfort-giving, weather-resisting wear.

BARBOURS Ltd.
14 Beacon Buildings,
South Shields.

"MILLER-KELVIN"

MOTOR LAUNCHES

**"Fifer" Fishing Boat Winches
and Equipment**

JAMES N. MILLER & SONS LTD
Shipbuilders, St. Monance, Scotland

FACIAL HAIRS

removed by Marella Home Outfit, genuine Electrolysis process; easy to use in own home, fully guaranteed to remove each hair and root. **TEN days' FREE Trial.** Cash or 20-monthly. Write for illustrated particulars free in plain envelope.

The Marella Company,

(MC), 257 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

A Scottish Coxswain



The Smallest Life-boat

costs £13,000.

The Lifeboat

Service has

never been needed more than it is today
— but, like everything else, it costs more.

The smallest contribution

will help, send yours to

ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION

**42, GROSVENOR GARDENS,
LONDON, S.W.1**

Treasurer:

His Grace The Duke of Northumberland

Secretary:

Col. A. D. Burnett Brown, OBE, MC, TD, MA.

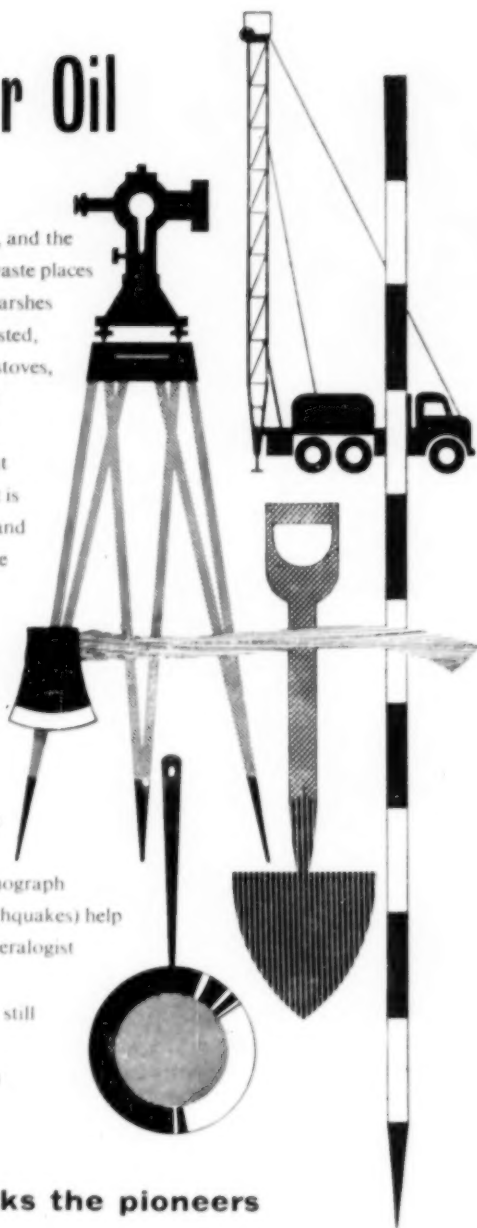
Pioneering for Oil

TO THE OILMEN of today goes the credit, and the adventure, of opening up many of the waste places of the earth. Under deserts, prairies, marshes and seas, otherwise bleak and unharvested, may lie oil. Oil for lamps, for cooking stoves, for industry, for farming, for the world on wheels, the ships and aircraft of all nations. The oilmen must always go out and find new sources of supply, so great is the demand. They must drill the wasteland to dredge up the liquid treasure that the earth holds imprisoned.

But that treasure has to be located first. More than a million wells have been drilled for oil through the earth's surface during the last ninety years.

But only a fraction of these exploratory drillings have found oil. Shell Research is constantly advancing the science of oil-finding. Today the aeroplane, the helicopter and the seismograph (measuring waves from man-made earthquakes) help the geologist, the geophysicist, the mineralogist and the palaeontologist.

The search for oil is still an adventure, still an advance into the unknown. The oilmen are like the migrating cranes in Homer, settling ever onwards.



research backs the pioneers

THE SHELL PETROLEUM COMPANY LIMITED, ST. HELEN'S COURT, LONDON, E.C.3.



The Love Story of the Chef de Bateau

D. MANNERS-SUTTON

HE was inordinately tall. He must have been at least six feet three in height, for when he ascended the galley steps and put his head through the doorway leading to the aft-deck of the *Prinz Friedrich* he had to stoop considerably to get through it at all. He was lean also, which gave him a greater appearance of height, and his frame was loosely put together, as if here and there a joint was a little out of place. He reminded one of nothing so much as a *burattino* from some Italian puppet-theatre, with its wires too loose. The traditional cook's cap and apron seemed, on his strange figure, put on more as a joke than anything else, especially as he wore a large soft black cravat on his white shirt, tied in the manner of a Boule Mich artist rather than in that of a chef. His hair, too, was longer than the heat of the Congo warranted, though he made no pretence of being either poet or artist. He was, by his own statement, a philosopher. '*Je suis philosophe*,' he introduced himself to me more than fifteen years ago, the day that I boarded the *Prinz Friedrich* at

Kabalo to travel the upper reaches of the great Congo River. '*Achille Brune, at your service, mam'selle*,' were his exact words, as he swept off his cook's cap to make a low bow in acknowledgment of my arrival, and then added in that gay and whimsical manner which was so truly a part of his amazing personality: '*Je suis philosophe*.'

Strange people forgather in the Congo, I thought. Here was the cook of a little snub-nosed, wood-burning river-boat stating calmly that he was a philosopher, just as any grey-haired professor might do in the chair of some university!

But if he were a philosopher, he was a remarkably practical one, for after one quick glance at my attire, from my high boots to the single-crowned Stetson perched jauntily on my head, he did not hesitate for the fraction of a second before calling the Captain. When the round, red-faced Flemish skipper appeared, he explained the situation with remarkable clearness by merely waving his long arms in the direction of my hat.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

The Captain looked grave. 'A single-crowned Stetson in the Congo—that will never do, mam'selle,' and, taking my arm in his firm grip, he propelled me off the gangway and up the narrow path on shore which led through piles of wood lying in readiness for the next up-river boat. He brought me to a standstill in front of the counter of the one store which graced Kabalo in those days, a wooden shack with a corrugated-iron roof, in much the same manner that he brought his boat up to a wood-post, with a great show of energy, a final flourish, as it were, and then complete immobility. The *chef de bateau*, who had accompanied us, ordered the store clerk to put forth his pith helmets.

From a pile of khaki topees the clerk laid on the counter the Captain selected the ugliest, and, after taking off my much-prized and elegant Stetson, jammed the helmet firmly on my head. Then, putting my Stetson under his arm, he announced calmly that I owed the store three hundred and seventy-five francs—and the helmet was cheap at the price. 'Mam'selle is a fool,' he told the clerk, 'but she cannot help it. All her compatriots are fools. They dare things. She has dared the Congo River in a single-crowned hat. One more day and she would have had sunstroke.' Then, turning on his heel, he left us, my precious Stetson still under his arm.

The young *chef de bateau*, with a gallantry that only a Gaul could achieve in such circumstances, presented me with a bottle of clover perfume, for which he indebted himself to the store for the best part of his next month's pay. 'So,' he said, with one of his superb long-armed gestures, 'when mam'selle smells this perfume she will not think herself in the wild, savage Congo, but in the green fields of her own country.'

With an even more theatrical gesture he opened the bottle and held it to my nostrils. When he thought that the odour of hot, humid jungle, of frangipani, deadly sweet, the acrid odour of bone, the gummy smell of collected rubber, all those odours, in fact, that go to make up the fragrant heart of the Dark Continent, had been sufficiently eliminated, he replaced the stopper, handed the bottle to me, and led me gently back to the *Prinz Friedrich*.

The Flemish skipper was near the gangplank when I came on board, busy twirling his absurd little moustache with an air of complete satisfaction, as if to say: 'Well, that is the way I deal with stupid foreigners who don't

know how to travel the tropics.' I managed to pass him by with superb indifference, despite the fact that under the protective shade of my khaki topee I knew that I was looking my worst.

Achille Brune left me at the door of my cabin. He bowed over my hand and disappeared down the gangway which led to the lower-deck, before I had time to murmur my thanks or ask him the Skipper's intentions with regard to my hat. I found it later on put carefully away in the cupboard in my cabin.

THAT, then, was my first acquaintanceship with the young philosopher Brune, an acquaintanceship which, ripening into friendship, has lasted more than fifteen years. The *chef de bateau* has proved a faithful friend to me, even as he has proved a faithful lover to the girl of his heart. And I have his bottle of clover perfume yet! I open it sometimes, not to bring to me recollections of green fields with brown and white cows lazily moving about in fleeting sunshine, but rather to recall once again the long, gangling figure of the chivalrous, gay, young philosopher of the Congo River.

I see him now, as I write this, standing on the aft-deck of the *Prinz Friedrich*, with the lamps lit and the passengers seated round the long narrow dining-table set there. Leaning nonchalantly against the galley companion-way, the young *chef* would expound his philosophy to an audience somewhat more tolerant than that which he had faced in the precincts of the lecture-hall in the University at Brussels. Young Achille Brune, plucked student in philosophy! But was it any wonder that he had been plucked, when he had stood up in front of grey-haired professors who had spent a lifetime in trying to find the fourth dimension, and asserted that there was only one dimension, and that was happiness, in which we all dwelt and had our being.

He told me about it once. One professor had been so enraged that he had leaned forward and boxed his ears; another had threatened to have him put in an asylum. 'Me, in an asylum,' said the young *chef*, with laughter in his voice, 'when I was only pointing out to them the way to true sanity—the realisation that when we wake in the morning we wake to a day of complete happiness, and if it comes to us otherwise, then it is just because we insist upon gazing into a distorted

THE LOVE STORY OF THE CHEF DE BATEAU

mirror of life like the Princess in the fairy-tale.'

Fortunately, in the Congo Achille's strange philosophy was listened to with good-natured tolerance, for he was an excellent *raconteur* and the passengers on the *Prinz Friedrich*, at eight o'clock in the evening, mellowed as they were by their before-dinner *apéritifs*, were ready for anything. So, standing by the companionway, brandishing whatever cooking implement he happened to have in hand at the moment when his inspiration came to him and sent him flying up the galley steps to expound it to an audience, he would put forth a discourse as wild and fantastic perhaps as the land he now lived in.

But however fantastic and unbelievable his philosophy might be, his cooking was excellent, I'll say that for him. His theory of happiness seemed to be worked into his pastry, for it was always light enough to blow away. His pancakes melted in one's mouth. The scraggy chickens, and the goat that masqueraded as kid, became tender and succulent in his hands—or should I say in his mind, for he always insisted that it was all in one's attitude of mind. Think cheerfully, and the pastry rose well. Laugh, and the chicken in the saucepan bubbled with glee and grew tender in the bubbling.

Achille was, in fact, quite famous on the waterways of the Congo for his *cuisine*. On account of it, passengers on the river always preferred the *Prinz Friedrich* to any other boat. Achille was, indeed, such an asset to the Société Anonyme des Bateaux du Congo Belge that the directors were constantly thinking of raising his salary. Not that their thought ever came to materialisation. Still, they had it in mind, and that shows how much Achille was thought of on the river.

IN his boyhood Achille had been apprenticed to an uncle in Bruges who owned a pastry-cook's business, so I was told, but his uncle, seeing in him some possibilities, sent the boy instead to study philosophy at the University. His career as a student coming to an end suddenly, the uncle set him to baking again, and evidently the young Achille had done well at it. But he had annoyed his uncle, as he had annoyed the professors, by telling him that if he would only conform to the theory of the one dimension, baking-powder would be unnecessary in the cakes and thus a great saving would be effected in the business. The uncle

acting even more violently than the irate professors, Achille left his bakehouse for ever.

He came to the Congo and found himself a post as *chef* on one of the boats that ply the great river between its rapids. In the Congo young Brune found the fantastical life that he desired, and his philosophy went well there. Yes, with the drums throbbing their uneven, sinister rhythm, a black rooster dripping its blood into a ju-ju fire, a lion roaring in a distant cavern, and a panther gliding stealthily from the jungle to the very river's edge and stealing the chickens tied up there ready for your to-morrow's dinner, one could believe anything. And with the dark line of jungle as a backsheet, and the lapping of the river waters as an orchestral accompaniment, any theatrical announcement, such as that there was no such thing as time and space, and that we all lived in a rosy-coloured one-dimensional happiness, seemed feasible. A fantastic enough theory, which we are as yet too young to understand, but it fitted perfectly into the savage pageantry of Congo River life. In a land where at any moment one might be set upon by a marauding leopard, fall to a pygmy's arrow, or be prayed to death by a witch-doctor, life seems well worth living well. Achille Brune would enlarge upon this: 'They understand what I mean,' he would say, pointing to where the black men were dancing round the bright flames of a bonfire on shore, or to where a medicine-man sat juggling his bones, bringing snakes out of the thin air for the edification of all who would pay a franc apiece. 'See your happiness, and it will be with you always. Everything that has ever been is still there to be discerned.' And so the young philosopher entertained us each evening on the *Prinz Friedrich* from Kabalo to Poste de Bois U16.

THE evening the boat tied up at U16 Achille was missing from his usual place as dinner-time entertainer. The black steward served our dinner in complete silence. We ate it with distaste: it was savourless. Then, just as the coffee was being served, the red-faced skipper took his usual place at the head of the table. He was always late when the boat tied up at some wood-post—but we never missed him! Immediately we bombarded him with questions. Where was young Brune? Was he sick? Had he gone ashore?

The Captain twirled his tiny moustache with

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

exaggerated coolness whilst he said: 'Geneviève lives at U16.'

Madame Mallot was the first to appreciate the significance of the Captain's remark. 'Ah,' she said, 'so that explains all!' She even could understand the young *chef's* philosophy now. Everyone in love thinks the world a place full of happiness. 'Then the thing for us to do,' added M. Knopf, seated next her at table, 'is to remain always in love. Perhaps that is what young Brune means by his strange theory of everlasting happiness.' 'Exactly so,' retorted the rotund and well-fed government official on the other side of Madame Mallot. 'One should always be in love with something—a woman, one's work, a piece of scenery, with something, it does not matter greatly what.'

We toasted the young *chef* in champagne that night. Wished him luck, and hoped that his Geneviève was pretty.

She was, the Captain assured us, adding with undue petulance: 'But she's a good girl, brought up in a convent, only just come out here to join her father, a widower. He runs the wood-post here.' The Captain seemed to emphasise her goodness with particular annoyance. Perhaps when Geneviève had first come up-river he had tried his luck and been repulsed. Put in his place probably, and she had bestowed her shy smile on the young *chef*, who was genuinely in love with her.

IT was quite in keeping with the life and philosophy of this extraordinary young man that he should have the strangest love story that could well be found anywhere, and which I will now proceed to relate to you—at least as much of it as I know. It was quite in keeping, too, that the girl he loved should be beautiful in a fairy-tale way, with clear grey eyes, hair the colour of a half-opened primrose, a smooth white brow, and a mouth that was sweet but grave. She smiled with her eyes, never with her lips, the young *chef* told us when we induced him to talk about her. It was a little way that she had, which was very sweet. 'A grave, serene girl,' he said of her. A contrast, indeed, to his own gaiety, but he never seemed to think that this gravity sat ill upon her, and perhaps indeed it did not. Her character might have been all the richer for it.

He told us, too, that Geneviève's father had given him his ultimatum. Achille must make it up with his uncle in Bruges, go back into his

business, in fact, and then all would be well between him and his fair-haired love. He would catch the next boat back to Belgium, said the young *chef*. He had a frying-pan in his hand at the time, with a pancake in it. Tossing the pancake in the air and catching it again with extraordinary dexterity, much to the relief of us all, for he was tossing it above our heads, he added that it would be enough for his uncle to see the photograph of Geneviève to be overcome with remorse. He would then take Achille back into his heart and business—he was a childless old man it seemed—and the two would live with him for the rest of his life. All so simple and Elysian in contemplation—but it did not turn out quite so well in fact.

It was not, however, till fully two years afterwards that I heard about the tragic end to this affair. The end! It seems absurd to write those words now, for, with the greater width of mental outlook I have acquired with the years, I know, what Achille Brune knew at the time and still knows, that it was only the beginning.

I never saw his Geneviève, so I have only his description of her to pass on to you. But he made her so vividly real to me that I have always been able to see her in my mind's eye. The girl with the unruffled brow, and eyes that had no mystery in them, like the untroubled waters of little brooks. Her serenity clothed her like a cloak. As he told me more and more about her after the *Prinz Friedrich* left Poste de Bois U16 on her slow way towards Chembi, she came to have for me a kind of legendary fame, such as might be attached to a Sleeping Beauty or a Snow White living amongst dwarfs. And when I came to say good-bye to the young *chef* at Chembi, for it was from there I started on my long safari northward, my last words were of her.

'You will write and tell me of your great adventures, mam'selle,' he said, bowing over my hand.

'Of course, and you in your turn will write to me all about yourself—and Geneviève, especially about Geneviève.' I left him then, but turned to look back at his tall, white-clad figure standing so loosely, as it were, on the poop of the *Prinz Friedrich*. We waved once, and that was all.

THAT was fifteen years ago, but we have kept up a correspondence ever since. In

THE LOVE STORY OF THE CHEF DE BATEAU

all those fifteen years many changes have taken place in the world at large and in my life in particular. The world has seen a war that has shaken the very foundations of our Western civilisation and left them cracked and unstable. For myself, I have married, borne children, and become a widow, but Achille Brune is still the *chef de bateau* of the *Prinz Friedrich* on the great Congo River. For him life holds no changes. He makes his pancakes, expounds his philosophy against the background of the riff-raff river-life. That is his domain. He has found in the Congo a life as mad as the theories he puts forth, and he likes it. And he still writes to me of Geneviève. I had a letter from him no later than to-day.

But let me go back a little, back to that day long ago when, having finished my great trek through Africa, I boarded a boat at Matadi, bound for Europe. On board the ship two letters were handed to me. One was from Achille Brune, and the other, when I opened it, proved to be from Madame Mallot, my fellow-passenger on the *Prinz Friedrich* two years before.

I read Achille Brune's letter first. It was brief, merely stating that Geneviève was with him for ever now, she and her child. I concluded that all had gone well at Bruges, and that the two were married, and that there was already a child of the union. But when I opened the letter of Madame Mallot, then the whole tragedy, or perhaps comedy—he would have it so—of Achille Brune's strange love affair lay bare before me.

Madame Mallot wrote in her wordy, gossipy way:

'I surmise, my dear, that you will want to know about Achille Brune, you were always so amused by him. (No, Madame Mallot, amused is not the right word, but let it pass.) His love affair turned out ill. It seems he went to Bruges, but before he arrived there his uncle died of heart-failure, and the pastry-cook's business went to some obscure cousin. Poor Achille had to write to his Geneviève then that he was coming back to the Congo poorer than he went, with no prospect ahead of him other than the cookhouse on board the *Prinz Friedrich*. I don't think his Geneviève would have minded much. She was a little *spirituelle*, you know, but papa raged and stormed and ended by taking her willy-nilly to Kongolo and marrying her to a store-clerk there. Quite an estimable young man, I

believe, with a rich aunt that he had not offended. I think the girl protested, but they bullied her into it, her father and the sisters from the convent on the hill. The clerk was moved a month afterwards to a little outpost on the Itembiri River, so when Achille arrived back in the Congo he found Geneviève safely established in her own home some few days' journey from the great waterway that the *Prinz Friedrich* traversed.

'But that happened more than a year ago. Still, as you have been so long away from civilisation and post-offices, in this letter I must chronicle a great number of events for you.

'Achille Brune continued as *chef de bateau* and seemed in no way changed—a little thinner perhaps, and his cook's cap more awry on his head. We saw him often, as my husband has to travel so much on the river. I don't think young Brune saw his Geneviève again until this trip of the *Prinz Friedrich*, when some maggot got into his head that she needed his help. Then he made the Captain—I don't know how he did it, for this new skipper is a stubborn little brute, but they tell me Achille carried a revolver under his apron—turn the *Prinz Friedrich* from her course and go up the Itembiri to Geneviève's outpost.

'He went ashore there, and, sure enough, the girl did need his help, or rather she needed someone's help, very much indeed. She was down with a bad bout of fever and likely to become a mother at any moment. Her husband was away in the jungle collecting rubber, and she was at the store alone but for *les noirs*. The *chef* carried her on board the *Prinz Friedrich* in his arms, giving up his own cabin to her, as the boat was full of passengers. Then, with a set face, he said to the Captain: "Full speed ahead, and we won't tie up till we get to Kongolo."

'I don't know how they ever did it, but they did, my dear, with Achille prodding the boat boys to keep them awake, and the skipper on the bridge in pyjamas and felt slippers, swearing by all that was unholy that he would never again try to guide a boat along the Congo River in the pitch blackness of an equatorial night.

'It was a race for Geneviève's life, but they didn't win, although the boat tied up at Kongolo before the baby was born. The *chef* carried her up to the hospital on the hill and stayed there pacing the corridors until one of the Sisters of Mercy came to tell him that a

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

child had been born—a girl. "But the mother?" asked Brune. Sister Mary Josephine told me about it afterwards. "The mother is dead."

'But that night on the *Prinz Friedrich* the chef was in his usual place as dinner *raconteur*, spinning a tart round on his finger and thumb whilst telling us that he had never been so happy in his life. *Ma chère*, can you imagine it? Nothing will ever vanquish that man! We thought at first that he was heartless, or already absorbed by another passion, but now we know that it is not so, for he is talking of adopting the child. The father, by the way, never returned from that rubber-gathering expedition. Up the Itembiri the natives object to rubber-collectors, except, of course, as *fourniture pour la soupe*. So convenient of him. But unfortunately the baby is hopelessly like her father—the deceased rubber-gatherer, I mean.'

That was what Madame Mallot wrote.

I FOLDED up the letter carefully and returned it to the envelope, then, taking up Achille Brune's shorter epistle, I read it again. 'Geneviève and her child are with me for ever now.' A brief, bald statement, about which I pondered deeply. There was such an enormous question attached to that simple statement: it opened up such possibilities for conjecture. Is there such a thing as death, after all? Is the body but a mask which we don in order to act out our individual parts in the great drama of life? Is death our last line, or is the drama eternal and our exit a mere slipping behind the scenes for a moment to put off our mask and become our real selves?

And who should be able to answer this question better than the Pierrot of the Great Congo River Show himself? He who strutted and paraded in front of life's backcloth might at least have the required knowledge of what happens when the curtain is rung down. I turn again to his letter and notice a short postscript added on the back of the page. It is his complete answer: 'You think that I have lost her,' the thin, sprawling hand has written, 'but you are mistaken. She will never leave me again.'

Yes, I could see it all. Now in that little cabin on board the *Prinz Friedrich*, where once she had lain on the bunk in such an agony of pain, he could hold her in his arms without shame. She was his for ever, with no

estimable government clerk to come between. In that realm of completeness where life and death are equally divided, that realm to which we have no access, but in which the young chef dwelt and had his being, Geneviève was all his. Even her child fits into the picture appropriately, for I can see him later on, outside the cookhouse door, tossing pancakes for her delight, the child sitting on the deck and clapping her hands with glee. 'Again,' she cries, 'again.'

Doesn't he write to me, too, some few years afterwards in this manner? 'Little Geneviève plays about my cabin door now. She is growing quite a big child. I sometimes feel that she is very much mine, for had I not some share in helping her into the world?'

That mad race down the Itembiri River with the face of young Brune set in hard lines, one hand on a revolver beneath his apron, the other prodding the sleepy fuel boys into action. The skipper's loud voice swearing horrid oaths. The passengers standing huddled and frightened on the lantern-lit top deck, and on the lower, the *noir* deck, a pandemonium of screaming women, chickens squawking and goats bleating with fear. And the boat pushing on and on through the intense blackness! Yes, indeed he had a great share in that child's birth, and it was just that he had been allowed to adopt her. The grandfather, I heard, had made no protest about the matter. He seemed to have gone to pieces with his daughter's death. He sat on the veranda of his shack all day, rocking backwards and forwards in a squeaky rocking-chair, saying: 'My daughter! Oh, my daughter!'

BUT all that happened a very long time ago.

There has been the dread interval of the war, during which, being held in an enemy country, I had no means of communicating with Achille Brune. Now, in this chaotic world, shaken every now and again by an earthquake of intolerance, let us see how the philosophy of the *chef de bateau* will stand. Will he be able to hold to his theory of complete happiness, when murders are committed coolly at so many kilos of sausages per murder; when hunger and ruffianism are still loose, law a joke, and order non-existent; when boys at the age of ten are already potential gangsters and few girls over twelve are virgins? He may not be dwelling amongst these things, he may still be on the great Congo River, but he will

THE LOVE STORY OF THE CHEF DE BATEAU

hear about them, read about them—they must affect him in some way.

Then let us see if he still holds to his philosophy *now*. I have told you that I received a letter from him this morning, now I will give you its contents:

'Dear Mademoiselle. (He insists upon addressing me still as mademoiselle, ignoring completely the fact of my two children rapidly growing up. For him I have never been and never will be anything else than the infinitely stupid and slightly refractory mademoiselle who tried to journey through equatorial Africa with a single-crowned Stetson on her head, and had to have her rage at its confiscation placated with a bottle of clover perfume.) It was indeed a pleasure to hear from you again. And you ask of my affairs. All is well with me. Little Geneviève is growing up. She will soon have to be sent away to finishing-school in Bruges. We are thinking of accompanying her for a short

time. I have a few grey hairs now, mademoiselle. The climate of the Congo takes one's colouring away early. But Geneviève, my Geneviève, has still her golden hair. She is ageless.'

So his philosophy is still intact, still standing firmly like a lighted candle in a world of typhoon darkness. The mad philosopher he used to be called on the waterways of the Congo. But I can't help thinking, as I read again his last letter, so calm, so secure, so happy in its wording, that this same mad philosopher is the only sane person in the great world of unreality that we have built around us, that, living as he does in the complete non-existence of time and space, of sorrow and tragedy, he has found that secret of existence for which we are all searching, whether we admit it or not—that life is not just a state of consciousness in which we can relapse into sin, sickness and death, but a state of God which is omnipotent and eternal.

February First Story : *My Brother Florence* by N. M. Roberts.

Fox Tryst

E-yah-e yah-e, e-yah-e yah-e yah-e . . .

*From fog-enfolded wood to freezing sky,
Challenging the iron-hearted night
With the wild female's undisputed right
To woo her love in feline, foxy fashion,
The vixen's weird, unearthly cry
Protests her passion.*

*You banshee Juliet, no vulpine etiquette
Demands that you observe a maidenly reserve.*

*A year ago this January night,
At the same hour,
From the same leafless, icy bower,
You called, and now,
With intermittent, softer serenade
Charting his secret progress down the glade,
A moving shade, by shade of scrub and plough,
The selfsame lovelorn wight
Comes velvet-footed through the shrouding mist
To keep a year-old tryst.*

E-yah-e yah-e, e-yah-e yah-e yah-e . . .

EGAN MACKINLAY.

Prehistory in Peat

A. J. FORREST

PARADOXICALLY, as modern civilisation advances in complexity we learn more about prehistoric times. The scientific process known as 'pollen analysis' permits us to estimate with accuracy the age of recovered earthbound objects. By examining microscopically samples of the soil clamped around these objects, archaeologists gain their essential age-clues. From America has come a radio-carbon process, also of great value in dating excavated relics. But it is one thing to have reliable powers of age assessment, as furnished by contemporary science, and another to find the objects on which to focus them. Here we are indebted to Nature—to two processes of natural preservation, examples of which are most conspicuous today in the northern European prehistoric cultural area, ranging from north-west Germany to Denmark and Holland.

The peat-beds in these countries do, in fact, possess the ingredients of living museums, for such is their chemical quality that in their damp limbo not only articles of clothing, textile materials, weapons, tools, and harnessings, but also human beings, remain intact throughout ages of time. To date, records exist of the discovery of about a hundred human bodies, mostly uncorrupted, from these northern peat-seams. Several, it is deduced, breathed their last at about the time of Christ or shortly afterwards. Yet their appearance on recovery, with their muscular tissues unviolated, the very expressions on their faces finely preserved, suggests not an age of 2000 years, but a sleep, not even of death, which began only a few hours earlier. To me, their preservation is uncannily perfect. And now that these northern nations tend to pioneer new commercial usages for their peat, apart from its simple fuel value, one may expect a continuous stream of such discoveries from beds hitherto unprobed.

ONE of the most interesting finds emerged one May morning in 1950 when peat-cutters were at work in Tollund Mose (Bog) in central Jutland. At a depth of 7 feet they came across a man's body, lying in a hunched-up, cramped posture. Afraid to move him, or even to expose him fully, because they linked him with a local crime, still unsolved, the peat-cutters promptly reported their discovery to the police. To experts, the deep peat-stain discolouring the man's shoulders at once betokened his long isolation there. Archaeologists were informed. The body was then dug out with laborious and painstaking care. Previously, through clumsy or amateur exhumations in such circumstances, exposure to the air had undone in a few hours all the wonderful work of preservation achieved by nature in her peat-bed throughout two millennia.

Happily, in this instance, no mistake was made. The body, most cautiously raised, was treated instantly with special embalment preparations, for archaeologists realised at once that chance had presented them with an outstanding human relic. The man was unclothed, save for a belt, and a skin cap, the fur turned inwards, stitched in eight pieces, which fitted his head tightly like a skull-cap. Round his neck was a knotted noose. It consisted of smooth plaited leather thongs, was tight at the neck, and the severed end of it dangled loosely down his back. Clearly, he had been hanged.

The find's most remarkable feature, however, was the man's face. It was that of a peasant aristocrat, with furrowed brow, well-developed temples, humorous wrinkles round his eyes, a firm-set mouth, a nose slightly crooked by the peat's compression, while an expression of calm resignation, virtually one of serenity, gave rare character to his composure. Here, obviously, was no common

criminal, no intemperate rebel, but a man of influence and reflection, a leader perhaps of his community. Yet, why had he been hanged?

The answer must, of course, remain speculative, but archaeological theory leans to the view that he represented a sacrificial offering made by his people in appeasement of their gods. Though tribes differed in custom, many northern barbaric communities, at this period, revered the act of hanging as an honour, one which conferred merit on the victim in the sight of their deities. The people knew that Odin himself was hanged. At the pagan temples of Lejre and Uppsala, victims selected for fertility rites were honoured, too, by the hangman's graces. The Tollund man may have been a fertility sacrifice. Perhaps the annual harvest had been disastrous for his settlement, ushering in famine, sickness, and much unalleviated sadness. So, to ensure that Nerthus, Goddess Mother of the Earth, should not again scowl on their labours, or impoverish their next harvest, custom may have demanded that the community's headman himself be killed, either to reason with her or to appease her. Or perhaps he was hanged to promote victory in battle, freedom from pestilence, or to win favours from the erratic and often irascible weather-gods. We shall never know. But we are certain that he met his sacrificial end calmly. Some discern just the flicker of an ironic smile on his features. Thus a good man, probably a wise man, was ceremoniously dispatched to meet his god face to face and so buy good fortune for his people.

Incidentally, analysis of Tollund Man's stomach contents sheds light on the eating habits of his age. Seemingly he had no meat before his death, but lived, it appears, on a kind of mash or porridge made up of wild and cultivated plants. The wild plants included charlock, shepherd's purse, and sorrel. Intermingled with them were traces of barley and linseed. Weeds, it seems, were an important item in the diet of primitive Europeans.

OTHER peat-redeemed bodies too, recovered clothes-less and intact, are unquestionably the victims of pagan sacrifice. In fact, the bogs into which they were cast may well have figured as sacred bogs or bogs set aside and dedicated to the welfare of specific gods. But this form of interment was reserved, also, for those who violated their

community's laws or ethics. The Borremose girl is an illustration. Recovered in 1948, this girl, of the Iron Age, dug up with her natural plumpness still evident, had had her skull crushed. Beside her was a twitch. Her hair had been removed. Her fate appears to confirm the observations of Tacitus, which tell us how Germanic peoples were wont to dispose of their criminals, such as wives unfaithful to their husbands, by flogging them, shaving their heads, and then burying them in bogs. According to the rough justice of that age, these fierce-minded people preferred to deal publicly with traitors, deserters, and suchlike knaves. They were executed in sight of all. But those guilty of unnatural offences, or crimes of shame, suffered the supreme penalty in secret. After, we must assume, some sort of tribal tribunal had passed sentence, the malefactor then, in the eyes of his or her fellows, disappeared. Retribution, so it was imagined, confined the transgressor to the eternal oblivion of a nameless mere or peat-bed. Death, in almost all such cases, was by drowning, an act assisted by a wattle hurdle laid over the victim and held over him or weighed down by a substantial stone until his struggles ceased.

It is fortunate for Danish archaeologists that their country is so rich in peat deposits. Finds occur not only in central Jutland, but also in such regions as Undevlev in south Jutland, on the island of Falster and in Himmerland. Each fresh discovery, beginning as a mystery, fascinates all with a feeling for scientific detection. The clues accompanying it are not simply a challenge to investigation. They will, if properly unravelled, almost certainly draw back a veil from the past, telling us how our remote forebears dressed, what they ate, the animals and pets they kept, the seeds they grew, the very constitution of their brains, and even what they looked like, in a more realistic manner than any television or cinema screen can convey. For such backward glimpses of life, 1500 to 2000 years ago, we are indebted to peat. One rather astonishing characteristic of Denmark's bog finds is their lack of grave furnishings. Ordinarily, at death, these prehistoric peoples were provided with vessels loaded with food and drink to sustain them on their travels to the next world. But such charity was refused, it seems, to criminals, whereas those sacrificed in the name of pagan deities needed no journey provisions. Through the ritualistic rope, they stepped at once out

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

of their world into the presence of their gods, to entreat with them, or placate them, and so be received as guests in their halls of Valhalla.

NOW if I may switch the scene for a moment to Domlands Moor, near Windeby, in Schleswig-Holstein, it is to reveal a German peat-bed discovery of unusual significance. Here turf-cutters discovered on 19th May 1952 two peat-preserved bodies, about the origin of which scientists are still conjecturing. I mean 'origin,' of course, in the interment sense. One was of a young girl aged 14. Near her, but not so favoured by peat's preservative powers, were the parchment-like remains of a male adult about 30 years of age. The burials took place, according to Dr Schladow of the Schleswig Landesmuseum, during the 1st century B.C. The girl, long-limbed, fully-developed, and 5 feet 9 inches tall, wore only a tiny furskin cape. Her eyes were tightly bandaged with what on analysis proves to have been a multicoloured hair-ribbon, with red and yellow threads in it artificially dyed. A rope was knotted at the nape of her neck. Beside her were several twitches, used perhaps as her scourges, or to force her down during her terrifying last struggles. The fingers of her right hand, tightly clenched, do at least suggest that she resisted her pitiless fate. Her head had been shaved. The man, killed near her, a copartner in her savage destiny, may have had some personal link with her crime, but it is sheer speculation to assume, as some romancers have done already, that here stands revealed the tragic sequel to an eternal triangle of twenty centuries ago.

X-ray examination attested to the completeness of the girl's brain. One of the few examples of an intact human brain of such antiquity, it is preserved now in the Max Planck Institute at Giessen. In this case, food offerings were discovered. So some thought of charity, or was it humanity, must have speeded one or other of these two unfortunate people into their new world, even though they were marked out for earthly perdition and not expected, according to general belief, ever to reside beyond their damp grave. The clay bowl and wooden mould thus recovered were

scientifically analysed and dated, and the evidence of the finds, as well as that of pollen deposits, sifted from the actual burial soil, confirms the period during which this girl was alive. Normally, her contemporaries, on ending their natural life, were burnt, and their ashes preserved in urns.

A SECOND source of preservation, as I mentioned at the outset of this study, also exists. But this, it seems, is restricted to Denmark. There it presents us with a picture of prehistoric life a thousand or more years earlier, for in the Bronze Age, 1400 to 1000 B.C., the Teutonic inhabitants of what is now Denmark buried their chieftains and persons of importance in hollowed-out oak-trunks, afterwards piling a grassy mound over them. These folk were buried, not in grave-clothes, but in their everyday wear. And here Nature's second miracle of preservation intervenes. It often happened that such coffins were laid upon a substratum containing iron oxide, and turves, similarly impregnated, made up their mounds. Soon this hard core weathered into a complete seal, forming a capsule round the oak-trunk. So disposed, the body lay hermetically sealed and secure against the defilement of centuries.

To archaeologists, scientists, and social historians to-day falls the enviable distinction of being able to view impartially examples of prehistoric men, women, and children, alive three to four thousand years ago, whose very hair and finger-nails retain their original colour and shape. And the garments, recovered as all-of-a-piece as themselves, are unbiased witnesses of their domestic craft-skills. These are, I feel, precious, enriching, authentic, and fascinating privileges for modern investigators.

In one Danish district, Bronze Age men wore fur caps, a fur cape, loincloth, and foot-bindings. Women as their obligatory costume wore a short jacket and a rectangular piece rather like a blanket wrapped round their waists. These textiles were coarsely spun from long-haired brown sheep's wool. By the late Bronze Age, however, girls wore chequered skirts of excellent quality spun from nettle yarn.

The Snaring of Ptarmigan

HENRY TEGNER

THE ptarmigan is a fascinating bird. In this country he has not been taken very much notice of, either by the naturalist or the sportsman. This can undoubtedly be accounted for by the fact that ptarmigan live in terrain which is not only inaccessible during a great part of the year, but which also, even during the summer months, can only be reached by considerable strenuous climbing.

That any bird can not only survive, but thrive, in the climate experienced during the winter at altitudes above the 2000-foot mark is in itself a cause for wonder. For many months out of the twelve the ptarmigan's habitat is under a considerable depth of ice and snow. To obtain food, the bird has to burrow beneath the snow's surface so as to reach his nourishment. As it is not unusual on the high tops for sleet to precede snow and to become frozen, and then for a snowfall to follow, covering the frozen vegetation, the problem of how the ptarmigan survives is a thing to be marvelled at.

When the ptarmigan moults he changes in a most marked manner the entire colouring of his plumage. Snow-white in his winter dress, he assumes an attractive grey dress during the summer.

The ptarmigan has a most unusual voice. You can frequently hear the birds croaking as they scuttle amongst the granite scree. To me the call sounds rather like two pieces of quartz being rubbed together.

These birds of the snow are remarkably quick fliers. When on the wing they appear to slither along the background of bare hillside and rock. As with the other members of the grouse family, their flight consists of a number of quick wing-beats followed by a glide.

Those who have had experience of these birds frequently differ in their opinion of the ptarmigan's behaviour. This divergency of opinion is, however, understandable when it

is realised that many ptarmigan seldom, if ever, see a human being.

A DAY'S ptarmigan-shooting is one of the most pleasant forms of sport I know, but it is hard work. No shooting-brake, or Land Rover, can take one to one's butt. It is always necessary to climb to ptarmigan country on Shanks's mare.

On occasion ptarmigan can be so tame that it is difficult to put them up. They lie like logs. At other times they can be as wild as the proverbial hawk.

I remember once going out to the high tops of the Grampians with three companions for a day at the ptarmigan. We were to shoot a series of corries which were renowned for the number of these birds which dwelt in them. Two of the party were above-average shots, and the other two were by no means novices.

Once ptarmigan level had been reached, we quickly found the birds. They appeared to know exactly how to deal with the situation. Scarcely a bird would rise in shot. Coveys would get up, well in front of the line of guns walking along one side of the corrie, to flit over to the other side. When the opposite slope was walked back downhill, the birds would cross again to where we had first put them up.

One covey of seven birds decided, on the return shoot, to pitch on to a patch of close-cropped grass in the middle of the main corrie, about three hundred yards in front of the guns. Except for a few granite boulders, the grass patch, which was about the size of a tennis-court, was bare.

We decided to approach the squatted birds from the four points of the compass. As all four were experienced shots and we were in constant view of one another, there was no danger in this manoeuvre.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Everything went according to plan. As the four guns gathered towards their objective, I began to wonder whether the birds had actually settled where we thought they had. We almost trod on the covey before it exploded out of the ground like a burst water-pipe. Each bird took its own line of flight. One bird out of this lot was put in the gamebag; another was added on the way home. Total tally—a brace to four guns after a long day's shooting.

On another occasion when I was deer-stalking in Lochaber I set off to see if I could get a few ptarmigan for the larder. I went out alone with a shotgun and a gamebag. There was a sprinkling of early snow above the 2000-foot level. The birds I came across sat tight. You had to let them get on a bit before loosing off at them. I had six birds in the bag before lunch-time, all I required for the larder.

I HAVE frequently come across the ptarmigan when after the red deer. They have intrigued me. I recently decided to do a bit of research on the ptarmigan. There is not a great deal of literature on the species. I was rather sceptical when I read, in Francis Morris's *A History of British Birds*, that in the year 1839 one dealer alone shipped six thousand ptarmigan for London, two thousand for Hull, and two thousand for Liverpool; and early in March 1840 a salesman in Leadenhall market received fifteen thousand ptarmigan that had been consigned to him. Morris goes on to say also that a Mr Lloyd reports that a dealer in Norway will dispose of fifty thousand snared ptarmigan in a season.

Anxious to check this information, I wrote to my friend Conservator Holger Holgersen of the Stavanger Museum in Norway. Dr

Holgersen writes that the figures of snared ptarmigan are by no means unreasonable. Snaring ptarmigan in Norway is apparently quite an industry. The annual catch for the country amounts to an average of a million birds in a season. In a peak year this figure may well be exceeded.

Norway is divided into eighteen rural counties. Oppland is one of them. In Dovre, one of the thirty-two districts of Oppland, the following numbers of birds were taken in four consecutive winters: 1935-36, 3827; 1936-37, 3389; 1937-38, 5462; 1938-39, 4313. In Oyer, another district in the same county, the figures were 613 birds in 1937-38 and 1220 in 1938-39. In the small valley of Sirdal, not far east of Stavanger, 20,000 birds were snared in one winter. Most of these ptarmigan are taken in horsehair or fine brass wire snares. Comparatively few are shot.

The trapping of ptarmigan is a not-unimportant source of revenue for many Norwegian hill-farmers who have little cultivated ground and who depend on game, fish, and hill-sheep for their living. The use of the snare is prohibited by law for all other birds except ptarmigan. The open season for these birds is from 15th September to 28th February, except in certain counties where there are slight divergencies of date.

The season 1952-53 was a poor one. As a consequence, the price of ptarmigan was high, a figure of 7.50 kroner (7s. 6d.) per bird being the average. During a plentiful season the price is appreciably lower.

The snaring of ptarmigan is never likely to become a practice in this country, but ptarmigan-shooting could easily become a more popular sport than it is at present. As has already been stated, it is an arduous pastime, but none the less it can be an extremely fascinating and exciting one.

Riches

*I was a very poor man once,
I didn't have a dollar,
I owned only one ragged shirt
And that without a collar.
But now I've shirts and collars too
And never lack a dollar
I never know which shirt to wear
And simply loathe a collar.*

H. R. DAFFIN.



You Can't Keep a Good Man Down

LANGSTON DAY

I NEVER did discover anything for certain about Yusuf's private life. And this was strange, because he was far from reticent about his personal affairs; in fact, he offered me embarrassingly intimate peeps at his family circle whenever he wrote to me asking for a rise of pay.

'Honoured Sir,' he would begin, 'I am poor man of large families, and the piastres which I receive from you it is insufficient to support my many stomachs.'

I forget what salary an Egyptian clerk draws from the British Army, but I fancy it is enough to support a good many stomachs. The picture which arose in my mind of Yusuf handing a miserably-insufficient pay-packet to a careworn wife standing in front of a hollow-eyed gaggle of infants was no doubt, as I was to come to learn, very wide of the mark, but at that time I had been in Egypt only a few weeks and I knew nothing about the gentle persuasiveness of a race which trades on personal affliction.

I was also much moved by the touching conclusion to these letters of Yusuf's, such as: 'My wife and little ones cry continually to Heaven to preserve you in health and higher

rank.' Although D.O.R.E. of Belbeis, I was not yet a senior officer.

It is true Yusuf never said anything about joining in these round-the-clock supplications himself, and indeed he hardly looked the man for it. His large, sweeping moustache seemed to conceal a smirk, as if he were perpetually amused at the frailties of human nature, and one felt that his eyes, which swivelled sideways under heavy lids, were more suited to looking after the main chances than to appeals to Allah. He padded obsequiously about the office in his elastic-sided boots, and when he addressed me it was 'Mistortrrrr Day,' in a voice which ventured out shyly like early sunshine in spring.

I mean, of course, English spring sunshine, for in Egypt the spring comes prosaically, almost unnoticed, with none of that joyous throwing open of windows to sudden overtures of bird-song. You sit behind windows of fine white canvas, or at any rate we did, because glass did not figure in the army inventories, and the bird-song is limited mainly to the squeal of kite-hawks. Perhaps this is why there are no pastoral poets in the Delta. I think I am right in saying that

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Egyptian poets write mostly on the theme of love. It is a very popular subject out there, and I remember wondering whether Yusuf was about to add a second wife and little ones to his prayer group when he came into the office one morning immaculately dressed in a new suit of purest white. It was rather a shock to me when my Quartermaster-sergeant drew me aside and asked me if I noticed any similarity in the texture of the suit and that of our army window-canvas.

The Court of Inquiry which followed was held under difficult circumstances, because at that time I had little knowledge of Arabic and several of Yusuf's suspected accomplices were among the gang of natives working for me who could not speak a word of English. Yusuf was our interpreter, and I cannot help thinking he may have twisted the evidence just a little in his own favour. In the end, I had to be content with confiscating the suit and serving him with a severe caution. Yusuf bore this with the air of a man who prefers to suffer the callous stupidity of his fellow-men in silence. He suggested somewhat pointedly that he should teach me Arabic.

I ACCEPTED the offer, and next day the lessons began. Yusuf, as I soon discovered, was very proud of his English, and he would roll out a sonorous English phrase for me to translate, like a Sergeant-major reciting 'Gunga Din.'

'The room must be aerated,' he would declaim, waving his hand oratorically.

'Don't you mean aired?'

He brushed aside the boorish interruption and went on: 'The bugs and louses shall be fumified with strong powders.'

He would quickly forget that he was supposed to be teaching me his own lingo and lapse into a display of his powers of oratory in English. 'The sun, he shines always in the heaven,' he said.

This statement interested me, because I happened to be building a new officers' mess for the Gunners, whose C.O. was a rather irascible and exacting Colonel. 'Do you mean it never rains out here?' I asked him.

Yusuf looked at me sharply. In the light of after events I believe his mind banked hard round several corners. 'Not rain,' he said. 'Always the sun, except when there blows the khamsin.'

In my own defence, I must say this sounded

quite probable. The Egyptian sun has something of that eternal quality which impregnates the whole country, and the native hovels in the poorer quarters are built of mud which would surely dissolve in a rainstorm. As a matter of fact, like the Children of Israel we used mud bricks without straw for the walls of army huts, and it seemed only a short step from this to plastering up the interior, in between the rafters, with a good stiff mixture of canal mud which rapidly baked hard in the heat.

Yusuf allowed the Gunners two or three days to settle in, and then I feel convinced he turned his prayer group on to praying for rain. Pretty effectively they did their work, for one evening there came a heavy shower such as had not been known for years. It swept away some dozens of hovels in the native quarter of Belbeis and it soaked through the roof of our newly-completed building.

The first clot of mud fell on to the table during dinner, spattering the Colonel's white mess uniform. The Gunners executed a masterly retreat, and I thought it advisable to take the first train to Cairo and stay there until the Colonel's blood-pressure had fallen a few points. It took me some time to live down this deplorable incident, and something in Yusuf's expression seemed to say 'Fifteen all,' but perhaps it was only my fancy.

IF I had been wise, I should have dropped the pilot at this point and engaged someone else to steer me past the rocks and shoals of Arabic. Learning a language from someone is bound to promote a certain flow of conversation and allow the teacher an insight into the personal affairs of his student.

One evening the conversation happened to turn on donkeys, and Yusuf wanted to know if I had ever ridden one. Hearing that I had not, he expatiated on the smooth, leisurely amble of the local donkeys, to ride which was like sitting in an armchair.

It so happened that my hut was a good long way from the mess which I shared with some officers of the A.S.C. and one or two others, and the idea of riding this distance instead of trudging through the soft sand was an attractive one. I don't know if Yusuf knew about this, but when he offered to get me a donkey from the village I agreed to have a look at it, and on seeing the beautiful milk-

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN

white creature which he brought me a few days later I bought him at once.

Melchizedek, as I called him, was a lovely donkey, and the ££10 I paid for him seemed all too little. I was so proud of him that when the Mamoor came to dinner with us one night I challenged him to produce a finer animal from his own stud. The Mamoor, a jovial-looking man with an immense paunch, examined Melchizedek closely and congratulated me on my purchase. With consummate oriental tact he left it at that until his departure at two in the morning, when he carried away several pints of our whisky and about ££15 of winnings at poker with equal nonchalance. 'This donkey,' he remarked casually, 'he was stolen from me.'

If it had been anyone but the Mamoor, such a remark would have been accepted with some reserve, but Ahmed Mustapha was scrupulously honest and a generous man into the bargain. He offered to waive the matter or to buy Melchizedek back for double the price I had paid for him. I firmly refused these kindly offers and parted with the animal for ££10. The Mamoor I knew would exact this precise sum from Yusuf, who was no doubt at the end of a 'daisy-chain.'

A few days later when Yusuf came into the office he looked at me sorrowfully as if to say: 'Who would have believed that a British officer would plot with the Mamoor to defraud an honest man?' Or was it: 'Fifteen thirty'?

HE who sups with the Devil needs a long spoon. Was it wise, I wondered, to continue this dangerous meal? For a week or two I wavered, and then something else occupied my attention. I heard that the C.R.E. intended to pay me an official visit accompanied by his wife.

This lady, I was told, often came with him on his visits to outlying stations, and in some respects her behaviour was in line with that of the court favourites in the days of the French kings. Not that she was in the least like the Pompadours and Du Barrys in morals or looks. Quite the contrary. But if you wished to be *au fait* with the C.R.E. you had to get on the right side of her, and the key to that was your attitude towards a perfectly revolting pug-dog named Toddles which always travelled with her.

I think there was a good deal of exaggeration

in some of these statements, but I soon saw there was none in the description of Toddles. He was a horrible creature, fat, bad-tempered, and smelly. How any woman could love him I couldn't imagine, but love him she obviously did, and the fuss she made when he disappeared one night I shall never forget.

I knew that the sappers and miners of the company I was attached to were quite incapable of purloining such a dreadful creature. It is true these Tamils and Telegus had a touching love of animals which went as far as borrowing my Quartermaster-sergeant's baby to nurse it, and even for one of their religious plays, in which the heroine after a ten-seconds' confinement in a tiny kiosk emerged triumphantly with a real infant in her arms; but I could not believe they would risk severe punishment by making off with a malodorous animal which snuffled like a bath-plug and looked like a rubber pig with hair on it. Nevertheless, we yielded, to superior authority, the C.R.E. insisting on every man's tent being searched, and when we drew a blank a trough of low pressure settled on Belbeis which showed no sign of moving to any other part of the Delta.

On the second morning of the Great Depression Yusuf padded softly to my desk and said in a low voice: 'Mistorrerrr Day, I wish to speak something.'

'What is it?' I asked sharply.

The lids came down lower over his eyes, and he seemed to be smiling gently behind his moustache. 'The little dog which the lady is losing—'

'What do you know about it?'

Yusuf spread his hands in a gesture of deprecation. 'These many hours I search for him in the village. I think perhaps I discover something, but I am not sure.'

I looked hard at him. 'Very well, you and I will go and see the Mamoor.'

His smile broadened and he shook his head. 'If the Mamoor should make a search, he who take the little dog will kill him and throw his body into the Sweetwater Canal.'

There was silence for about half-a-minute, save for the distant dub-dub-dub of a Petter engine that was busily irrigating the desert.

'If I were to give you 100 piastres,' I began.

Yusuf sighed deeply. 'This man who thieve the little dog, he would ask for 20 pounds, I think.'

In the end we struck a bargain for ££5, and that same night Yusuf came to my hut

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

carrying a sandbag from which he gingerly decanted a sullen and indignant pug-dog.

After the C.R.E. and his wife had gone away, I puzzled over the problem of how the wretched creature had been spirited from the arms of his mistress. A chance remark by one of my messmates who kept a mongrel gave me the clue. His dog, too, had disappeared on the fateful night, not returning until next morning. Though bad-tempered, Toddles was evidently susceptible to feminine charms.

'Thirty all,' I said to myself, 'and this is where I take mean advantage of my position and bring the game to an end.'

Summoning Yusuf, I said to him: 'You have taught me a smattering of Arabic and a whole lot about the Egyptian character. On the other hand, you have stolen my window canvas, deceived me disastrously about the local weather, sold me a stolen donkey, and nearly had me court-martialled by abducting the dog of my Colonel's wife. The time has come for us to part.'

I wish I could describe Yusuf's dramatic

rebuttal of these charges and the pathetic picture he drew of his wife and little ones slowly starving to death while he roamed the land of Egypt looking for work.

YUSUF went, presently to be replaced by a lugubrious young man who proved to be a drug-addict. Before we could engage another clerk I had sudden orders to transfer to Ismailia. I think Toddles may have had something to do with it, because, due to the international situation, Ismailia was rather an unhealthy place.

There I began work as D.O.R.E. with a different company of sappers and miners, a different Quartermaster-sergeant, and—well, not quite a new office clerk, because the clerk happened to be Yusuf wearing another new suit of window canvas.

As I walked into the office for the first time, he rose respectfully and smiled at me from behind his big moustache. This time he seemed to be saying: 'You can't keep a good man down.'

Out of the Deep

(From the French of Charles Guérin, 1873-1907)

*At the hour when the stars from the eastern spaces are peering,
I stood on the cliffs that look on the sea, and strode
Alone and laughing with pride in the squall's careering
To feel my blood leap up at the tempest's goad.*

*At the base of the cliffs there was thunder of waves defeated;
I measured the spaces of western sky whereon
A sunbeam flamed farewell as the sun retreated
And over the waters its waning glory shone.*

*I leant by a rocky wall smooth-hewn and salted
By the immemorial sprays of the endless tide,
Like a cross on the brink of a lonely pit, exalted
I clasped all space as I held my arms out wide.*

*And my full heart beat with the heart of the world's wide bosom,
The sea's salt out of the sea my strong veins drew;
I felt my body within me grow quick and blossom
With seed of stars that the winnowing night let through.*

*I wanted to moan more loud than the ocean thunders,
To breathe out my being in air like the tempest wrack;
And, death o'er-leapt, feel the sacred ardour that sunders
The soul from self that again unto God goes back.*

WILFRID THORLEY.

The Great Gun Trick

HENRY ELLENSON

PHILIP ASTLEY, sergeant-major and horse-breaker, was on foreign service with his regiment. He was also in a dilemma. Two of his comrades had quarrelled; there had been a challenge, and there was to be a duel. Astley's persuasion had failed to reconcile them, and now 18th-century military honour forbade him to refuse his services as a second—but at the same time he was unwilling to assist either of his friends towards death. He had therefore to find some way of allowing the duel to go forward whilst making sure at the same time that it did no damage to life or limb. And this was by no means an easy problem.

However, Astley had more than his share of mother-wit; and after much thought he arrived at a workable idea. First, he manufactured a pair of metal tubes, to fit snugly inside the barrels of the duelling pistols. Then he sought out the other second, and rehearsed him in a certain amount of elementary sleight of hand. On the morning of the encounter the two of them were then able to work a complicated little trick in which, though the weapons were loaded with apparent honesty, the false barrels were secretly slipped out before being handed to the principals, taking with them the bullets but leaving the powder. The duellists as a result faced each other with the due measure of murderous solemnity, but with what were in fact merely blank charges. No blood was spilt. True, the combatants insisted on three attempts at each other; but there is a limit to human persistence, even in affairs of honour, and the seconds were equal to the situation. Disgust set in, reconciliation followed, and the whole matter might easily have been forgotten.

NOW in course of time Astley left General Elliott's Light Horse to set up as a

riding-master and equestrian entertainer. He deserves remembering with honour, for, in effect, he was the creator of the English circus, and the spiritual ancestor of Sanger, Chipperfield, Barnum and Bertram Mills. His best-known venture was Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, over which he came to preside as entertainer-in-chief to the 18th-century public at large. His fame survived him, to be noticed by Dickens; and the tradition he established is with us yet.

Astley was not only a superb horseman; he was also an all-round showman with many stops to his organ. Like Lord George Sanger after him, he at first combined conjuring with his other activities; indeed, in later life he wrote a book about the art. Astley was never a man to waste a good idea. In the trickery with the pistols there was clearly the germ of a very good illusion; and after dressing it up a little he was able to offer it to the public. A pistol was solemnly loaded, in the presence of the onlookers; it was aimed at him, and fired; and by something which looked like a cross between agility and witchcraft he apparently managed to catch the bullet on the point of a knife—to the astonishment of all beholders, as the magic-books say.

In this way was born the great gun trick. Many other conjurers have claimed credit for it, but Astley's claim was the earliest. Throughout the 19th century it was performed more often than any other trick ever invented. To our great-grandfathers, it was the illusion *par excellence*, and meant as much to them as the sawing in half of a chorus-girl means to us. To the practitioners, it had every possible quality. It was not a trivial-looking effect, and this was important in an age which was demanding larger and more elaborate deceits, and coming to look down on the amiable jiggery-pokery with cards and balls of the Regency wizards. It had apparent risk, and

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

there was an effective denouement that went literally with a bang. At the same time, it needed little apparatus and it depended ultimately upon a sleight no more difficult than the vanishing of an egg, say, or the multiplication of billiard-balls. Small wonder that the trick created many reputations.

Now, in the light of the trick's history, it is as well to remember its origin—for it did, after all, arise as a means of saving life. Little more can be said for it. It is not at all easy to compute the amount of tragedy it came to bring about, but certainly it ended the lives of men, of women, of children and of at least one babe unborn. One man went mad because of it; another went to prison as well. Its latest victim was in the first rank of stage illusionists, in an age when stage illusionists were very great indeed. No other trick has done quite as much harm as this.

THOUGH Astley first performed the trick, it was undoubtedly John Henry Anderson who did most with it. Anderson was probably the man who really made stage conjuring into one of the heavy industries. He was a clever conjurer and a magnificent showman. After many triumphs in Scotland and elsewhere, he made his London debut in 1840 with a 'most gorgeous and costly apparatus of solid silver, the mechanical construction of which is upon a secret principle, hitherto unknown in Europe.' Through a career filled with events, the most notable of which was perhaps the burning down by accident of Covent Garden in 1856, he dominated his profession—and the gun trick was the most loudly-twanging string in his silver-plated harp. Of course, he claimed to have invented it. He did not. What he probably did invent was a new way of performing it, by using a bullet made of tinfoil and quicksilver amalgam, which dispersed into dust on firing. The marked bullet he seemed to catch was a real one, which would have been exchanged with the fake at some point by a process which presents no real difficulty.

Anderson seems never to have had an accident with the trick. Others were less successful. A troupe of Indian jugglers appeared with it in London in 1814, and worked it by the simplest means possible—by exchanging the guns, after loading, and substituting a harmless one for the lethal one. Exchanges of this sort are always risky;

there can be few conjurers who have not sometimes felt doubts—whether the watch they are battering to pieces is not, in fact, the one they have just borrowed, or whether the egg they are about to break into the topper is the real one, and not the pot one they have just had in their hands. But with guns, the stakes are too high; and the Indians paid them fatally on a night in Dublin soon afterwards.

The tragedy was as great in the case of De Linsky, a Continental expert giving a royal command performance to the family of one Prince Schwarzburg-Sondershausen. His victim was his wife. They had recently lost their first child, and she was at that time pregnant with a second; and she was understandably reluctant. His method was one that is never likely to be used again. A party of soldiers were to fire at the girl with rifles, and she was to appear to catch not one, but six, bullets. The cartridges were the sort that had to have the end bitten off before loading, and the soldiers had been trained to bite off not only the cap, but the ball as well. It needed only one man to blunder; and he was inevitably present. Mme Linsky died painfully two days after receiving a bullet in the abdomen, and Linsky himself went mad.

Astley had 'caught' the bullet on a knife; Anderson, in his hand. Some caught it on a metal plate, and others between their teeth. It was natural that sooner or later the idea of a William Tell act should occur to someone. It did in fact occur to De Grisy, a French performer of the early 19th century. De Grisy has a claim to fame, for he gave the first recorded performance of the watch trick—another great 19th-century favourite. Oddly enough, the occasion was a performance before the Pope; and the ill-treated watch belonged to a cardinal. He also seems to have invented the method of sawing a woman in half, for a performance at Constantinople before the Sultan—though it was many years before it was performed again, and De Grisy divided a page-boy in two instead of a glamour-girl.

He performed the William Tell version of the gun trick in Strasbourg; and, with the awful inevitability of these things, managed to bungle it and kill his own son. De Grisy, too, went insane, though only temporarily; in addition, he was tried and sentenced for homicide. During his sentence his wife died, and on his release he was a broken man. His

THE WOOD-BURNERS

wife's brother, who was also his chief assistant, stood by him and helped to collect together such of his paraphernalia as had not been sold, and even lent him his name. As Torrini, De Grisy made a last tour, but died in the middle of it.

The great French conjurer Robert-Houdin used the trick. It was in his repertoire when he was sent to Algeria by the government to outconjure the Berber sorcerers and mischief-makers; the mission was a success, and the trick itself helped in it. We can add this to the credit side, before noticing the last great disaster it caused.

This was the death of Chung Ling Soo, about half-a-century ago. He is still remembered by middle-aged gentlemen who saw him as small boys. He was not a real Chinaman, but the way he seemed so was perhaps the greatest of his many professional triumphs. Some say he was the greatest of all; certainly he was not far short of it.

With him, Astley's invention may have claimed its last sacrifice. Fashions have changed, and few people now have a chance to see the great gun trick. In its day, it was a good trick; but its present eclipse is perhaps as well.

The Wood-Burners

A. ANDERSON

THERE is a cavernous fireplace in my living-room with a great yawning basket which has an almost insatiable appetite for fuel. Certainly I could not afford to satisfy its requirements in coal at to-day's prices. Were it not for the joy of collecting wood, I swear I must have it out and replace it with one of those much-vaunted 'economical' grates of smaller dimensions and less persistent demands on the fuel store. But stay the old fireplace does and, to tell the truth, I am now thankful, in a way, for its massive proportions, for out of dire necessity to keep it replenished there grew this healthy habit of collecting firewood. Out, perforce, to the dim woods, and the heavier the load, the brighter the blaze.

In the early days it was a matter of taking the small band-saw into the wood, cutting up the dead wood, and dragging it down the leafy avenues to the open gate, out on the narrow roadway, down the steep decline at a run, and over the garden-wall to full possession and the waiting cross-legs, with old Alf the woodman grinning broadly at such displays of light-hearted violence.

All too soon the supply diminished, or seemed to move further and further afield, and Alf still gnawed his cutty-pipe, and grinned broader than ever as we lumbered heavily down the home stretch, to pause in brief respite ere the final effort of tossing caberwise the twice-heavy load over the garden-wall could be undertaken with at least some display of seeming vigour.

On Saturday afternoons, the woodpile grew in stature; on Friday evenings, a gaping void bespoke to-morrow's need. And old Alf would laugh through the swirling reek of his pipe and bite out his philosophies. 'This timber-gatherin's a hard job,' he'd say. 'A man'll warm his back three times—gettin' it, cuttin' it up, and keepin' th'eat from t'missus when it burns.'

THE garnering would be easier, and the store full, after a night's gale, when the strong west winds swept through the woods and whistled up the great hawthorn-hedges on the hill. Nearer at hand, the great limbs lay

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

on the floor of the wood, and the uprooted hawthorns awaited the saw and the towing-rope. We'd slip the noose around the thick end and, leaning well-nigh horizontal, plunge homeward with the prize. Alas, how often the hemp scrubbed itself to breaking-point on the scree, with the straining teamster performing a neat somersault into the ever-waiting bramble-patch beneath. The indignity and discomfiture we suffered, until some brighter soul revealed the solution in the use of a short length of chain to meet and endure the rigours of rock and scree.

The village turns out after a gale. Axes ring and the swish of saw-blades is everywhere, and nightfall sees a happy replenishment. With the end of day comes a well-earned rest, and the place has the peace of a village at repose after heavy labour. The blue smoke curls upward, sweet with the scent of the woods—the age-old tang of the forest depths and the places of woodmen and charcoal-burners, of archer and ancient venery. And the cottagers sit in the glow of oak and elm and beech, and the sparkly larch splutters across the room to be chased and crunched to blackness by many a childish foot.

Meanwhile, the old men sit in their places, dispensing much knowledge and advice on the burning properties of timber, how to cut it or split it, or merely burn it. And the blue smoke curls up the flue, out into the night, be it elm or ash, oak or sycamore, larch or spruce, to delight the homing fisherman, heaving his weary rubber-clad thighs up-wind from the darkening river. The village falls asleep in the justness of the day's labours, for the young had helped the aged with sound wind and muscle, and old-age had plied youth with wise advice and the ways of axe and wedge and saw, for it is not always the doughtiest who get through the quickest.

IN our capricious days we climb aloft for the dead branches of sycamore and elm, oft hauling the working tools in our wake, and there on some lofty pedestal ply saw and axe in the high network of branches, the place of the birds. The dead bough creaks, bends slowly earthward, then snaps and rattles down, to the cheers of the very young. Safely astride some healthy limb, the climber looks around for further deadwood. Is there not the tale of one such climber who sat on the outward side of the bough and cut himself into space!

BY now we know the sweetness of the burning timbers, the stubbornness and the alacrity, the woods of blazing heat, and the sulky indifferents.

Of all the sweet scents, give me the greying apple bough, or the incense-like smell of the glowing lime. Over the huddled rooftops, in my little market-town, come the scents of the charcoal-burners, for the place is surrounded by deep woods, and the children haul the dead boughs over the meadows to home and hearth. There is a great burning of a Sunday's morn, when the housewife feeds the hungry flue with her new ovenwood, and the blue smoke lifts or falls to the wind's whim, over the pantiles and down the narrow cobbled ways to the river. Sweet scent of larch, surely there is no other so clean and sweet of a winter's eve, as the bleak winds scatter the smoke over the village, and each cottage puffs its wisps heavenward for all to enjoy.

Larch is a great sparker, and many's the housewife who greets its advent with cries of despair for rug and carpet, although it seems to spark less if burnt in the whole log. Elm, too, and most of the pines, will splutter and fly, and a man has to be on the watch, and ever ready with a quick foot, to quench the flying sparks.

A veteran gean, or wild-cherry, grew on the edge of a rocky outcrop for many a long year, and faced all the battery of wind and weather. Gnarled and bowed to the east, he held a precarious perch until the visitation of a great wind in January. Alas, we woke to miss his silhouette on the Long Hill, and there he lay, head downwards in the broken rocks. We cut him up and brought his shining trunk homewards to cheer us through the long dark evenings. His scent pervaded the place, and gave us the joy of a cherrywood fire, until we discovered, some twelve months later, that we could turn some beautiful fruit-bowls from his tight-grained trunk, and now his remains adorn the place in the form of nut- and fruit-bowls, ashtrays, and the like. We wish we'd known about the turning before, but the lady of the house adopts her own philosophy. 'Besides,' says she, 'we have enough to dust, without having a houseful of these things.'

INTO a class of their own we put the burners, the hot and blazing kind—ash, sycamore, dry beech and split elm, and the blazing thorn. Surely, of all, the thorn gives the greatest heat

THE WOOD-BURNERS

and brightness. The grate whitens with the white glare of the blazing faggots, and chairs are slowly and reluctantly drawn back to a comfortable distance. Many's the blaze he makes on a cold January day when the hedgers are working down in the frozen pastures. In great heaps the bonfires burn bright on a cold scene and the men are warmed with a look into the white heart of the pile as they throw the thorny branches on top. Sparks fly abroad and the white ash greys the clothing. The clothes smell sweetly of wood-smoke as the men sit down in the farm-kitchen to steaming broth and broiled beef.

How well the spiked faggots burn of a cold winter's morn, even though those long needle-like thorns earn for the thorn the respect of hard and soft hands alike. A few sheets of yesterday's daily, a handful of thorn atop, and a merry blaze awaits the shivering laggard who yawns his way downstairs from the clinging blankets. Thankful we are for such kindling-wood. No broken packing-crates for us, or parcelled stuff at so much a bundle and dear at half the price.

WE are still reaping the sad harvest of the winter rigours of early 1947. Great stands of timber were slain by the hungry

rabbits at that time. Whole woods were destroyed by these rodents eating the bark from the boles. The ringed trees lived into the following year, then one by one, deprived of their life-blood, drooped and faded into grey, leafless skeletons, to fall easy prey later to any vagrant wind that entered the woods or swooped destructively along the hedgerows.

To-day, eight years later, there are many of these stricken trees still standing, and there are woods that are silent graveyards, where no leaves rustle, and no bees hunt the nectar in the high green tops, silent save for the creak of bough on bough. Some remain upright and gaunt, others lean on their dead fellows, and hundreds lie rotting on the forest floor, back to whence they sprang.

Here, alas, is the sadness of destruction. Often we pause in reflection and think of other days, of picnics in the once cool, leafy shade; then, remembering our errand, we shoulder axe and saw and lay to with a will, for it will soon be night and the pile is dwindling.

When the load has been borne over Thistle Hill we will straighten weary backs, and rest in sight of home. There'll be hot tea down there, and a cosy smell inside, besides enough fuel to keep that big grate quiet for a day at least.

To-morrow's needs are a delight in store.

Dawnward Bound

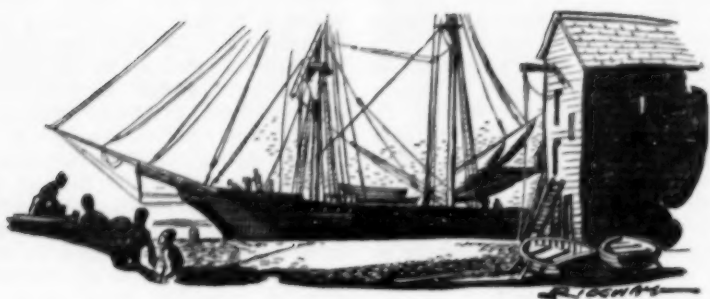
*Silver swan, silver swan, lend me your wings,
So deep is the darkness, so long is the way.
Could I fly like you the weary night through
I might yet overtake the skirts of the day.*

*My day was so short, was gone from me so quickly,
Swift as a shooting-star speeded the sun.
Sure Phaethon was mounted behind the bright horses,
And the stars rushed out headlong, crying: "See how they run!"*

*The star that I dwell on must be lifeless and shapeless,
No orderly sphere of harmonious sway,
But an ungainly mass in a clumsy progression,
To yield so much of night, and so little of day.*

*I'll find a planet of a different measure,
Moving in music towards resolute things.
I've a long way to fly to a fugitive treasure—
Silver swan, silver swan, lend me your wings!*

ANNE PHILIP SMITH.



Second Voyager

Captain FRANK H. SHAW

WE knew the worst we could expect by the time we humped our sea-chests and kit-bags over the *Dovenby's* slatternly gangway. Old birds aren't caught with chaff, and any talk about the glamour of sea-life met with our cynical derision. We'd had some—too much, in some cases. Two of our previous half-deck mates had swallowed the anchor altogether, and quit the sea-trade for good. Their indignant parents had interviewed our ex-slave-dealing owner and racked him to the core of his case-hardened soul. And their sons, our erstwhile shipmates, had written to say they hoped this vitriolic review would soften conditions for us—qualified—fools who intended to complete our articles of indenture and endure another two and a half years' torment.

Yes, we'd 'sent our little Cupids all ashore,' sure enough, but boyish resilience, an abundance of hero-worship during our too-brief leave at home, moral cowardice that forbade us to confess we'd had a sickener—all these conspired together to help us put a firm face on what lay ahead and determine to see the sorry business through.

The old ship did not look inviting. The Hamburg dock-strike had persisted for a long period; we'd been recalled from idleness to do the work of recalcitrant stevedores and

unload three thousand tons of saltpetre, and, if the trouble persisted, load up another three thousand tons of oddments for the Antipodes, without receiving a single debased German mark by way of reward. We were premium apprentices, remember, entitled to no remuneration for labour whilst learning the whole trade of a seaman. Indeed, when after a working-week's back-breaking toil we went aft to ask the captain, by name Fegan, for pocket-money enough to give us a run ashore, he grinned balefully and said: 'Fresh from home, the lot of ye, an' cadgin' go-ashore cash already!', the assumption being, of course, that we princelings would be loaded down with money as gifted by admiring uncles and aunts and suchlike worshippers. And when we said that what bit of pocket-money we'd had left after travelling from England, at our parents' expense, had been spent on necessary food, Fegan scorned us, withered us with a blasting: 'Isn't ship-grub sufficient for ye, young sharks that ye are!'

Maybe the food was adequate, but as no cook was aboard we had to prepare it ourselves. Fegan, his wife, and the acting-mate went ashore for their plentiful meals and marked the cost as necessary expenses.

In the result, we got a grudging three marks apiece—to be charged to our account—and

SECOND VOYAGER

had to be content. Often, in old-age retrospect, I wonder what the Officers' Federation would have had to say about it had a similar condition existed to-day, as of course it couldn't.

HAMBURG wasn't looking its best that winter of '96-'97, which was the bitterest endured for fifty years or so. Toby and I, travelling from home by the packet-steamer, had fared like fighting-cocks—saloon passengers with all privileges; but the steamer had docked late at night, too late for us to make our way aboard the *Dovenby*. In any case, the sailing-ship harbour was frozen solid, with ice-breakers carving an uncertain passage twice or thrice daily. A fellow-passenger in the old M.S. & L. steamer advised us to put up overnight at a hotel, and conducted us to one that was stunning in its grandeur. We hesitated, but our companion—a Swedish doctor of parts—insisted that we need have no fears. If funds ran short, we could consider ourselves his welcome guests—we'd talked sailing-ships most of the previous stormy day and night, and he had shown interest. Even so, we hated the idea of being indebted to 'a foreigner'; but we both had silver watches which we reckoned would foot the bill, if our ready cash ran out.

'This is the Kaiser's usual hotel when he visits Hamburg,' our cicerone said. Our hearts sank, but we faced the difficulty as bravely as might be. We ate a sumptuous supper. We were conducted to a double-bedded room fit for a selective duchess, with a roaring porcelain stove diffusing grateful warmth. The beds were the real German kind, with flock covers, and as soft as down. Indeed, when we went to bed, we lay on one flock cover and drew another over us, and there were no draughts. Heaven! But prior to retiring our Swedish friend insisted that we should see the sights in his company, and we had a conducted tour *de luxe* of all Hamburg's high-spots—some of them very, very high! The less said the better, perhaps, about that round of visits! Back in our over-opulent room, with coffee and cakes to greet us, Toby said: 'Well, we can always hock our overcoats if the watches don't pay the bill!'

We turned in blissfully, to be wakened by piping-hot coffee and rolls and honey brought

to the bedside, and the utmost consideration attending everything. This snack was a prelude to a breakfast that would have pleased Lucullus. Then we asked for the bill, our knees shaking. Four marks apiece! Incredible, but that was the Continent before the new century dawned! True, we got a wiggling from Fegan for reporting late aboard, but what odds! The *Dovenby* was so grim in her welcome that for the snap of a finger we felt we'd run over the tottery gangplank and work a passage home by the first ship leaving.

OUR quarters—the half-deck—were filthy beyond description, having been used in our absence as a dump for all the foulness accumulating aboard a port-bound ship, where refuse may not be canted into the water, for fear of befouling it. We found a spot under the fo'c'sle-head where we could change from shore-going uniforms into working dungarees, and readied ourselves for penal servitude. It was savagely, incredibly cold. The yards and rigging were ice-clad, with icicles hanging six feet long from the salients. A fierce north-easter was blowing. The decks were piled with snow and slime. True, a wan fire did burn in the galley, but we weren't allowed within during working-hours, in case we loafed.

We were told we could clean up the half-deck after we'd rigged cargo-gear to heave the saltpetre sacks to the lighters, frozen in alongside. The other half-deck fellows arrived around this time, having travelled by a different route, and two of them were starting their third voyage—real salty veterans. They got a sour reception from Tom Iredale, the acting-mate—no qualified officer, at that, merely a jumped-up bosun, related to the owner, and as hard as the nether millstone. But the two seniors, Chamberlain and Jeffcott, knew this slave-driver beforehand, and called his bluff. They threatened to secure accommodation ashore and charge it to the ship if our quarters weren't made habitable, and when Iredale showed ugly they said they'd set about him in man-mauling fashion and prove to him that he wasn't a real mate, anyhow! So Iredale emptied and cleaned the half-deck with his own callused hands, as meekly as a chidden lamb, with only Morgan, the 24-hour-a-day shipkeeper to help him.

Fegan wasn't for allowing a stove in that

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

twelve-foot-square steel box where our sea-going destinies were housed, even if the icicles were big and frequent. He said: 'Work hard and that'll warm ye; and ye'll be that tired ye'll fall asleep before ye get cold!' But I noticed, when sent to the saloon to report the arrival of a visiting consignee, that the after-quarters were overheated and snug, with a roaring fire in the stove—fuelled handsomely with purloined coal from previous cargoes of that mineral!

However, Chamberlain threatened to write to his father to put the matter before the owners, and Chamberlain's father was a senior naval officer, who was credited with illimitable pull with the Board of Trade; and Morgan dug out a small barrel-stove from somewhere, and we hauled up coal from the peak, and put a bucket of water handy to extinguish any fire that might occur where the stove-pipe passed through the deck-head. We emptied that bucket at least twice every night before turning in, so cavalierly did we treat Fegan's accumulated hoard of black diamonds.

But this cargo-gear had to be rigged, and I, only just a passed-out first-voyager, was given the task of doing it. A sailorising job. I swelled with pride at the trust imposed. It was no light matter. A rope-span of six-inch stuff had to be stretched from foremast to main, and guys from the yardarms, with heavy, terribly heavy, purchase-blocks swung in the middle. A blizzard was blowing furiously, snow and sleet whirled everywhere. What did I care, with a man's job to hold down! But I had to be lowered down in a bowline, and thawed out in front of the galley fire before I'd half finished my task. I was frozen like a marble statue. And I'll never forget the screaming agony as circulation returned to my frostbitten extremities. But, such being the spirit of windship youth, I insisted on completing that cargo-gear as soon as movement was possible, and was glad I did it. It would never have done for a second voyager to fall down on an assignment. Pride won where human muscle might have failed.

AFTER that followed a dreary spell of cargo-handling, the misshapen sacks of nitre being frozen rock-hard. The striking stvedores used to scramble across the ice-hummocks and heave chunks of it at us as we

worked on deck, as some needed to do, though the majority were below, piling and strapping the sacks. So that the circulation of the blood might be unimpeded, Fegan ordered that the donkey-engine must not be used—hand-winchies were sufficient; and this may have been a useful order, for there were no cases of sickness, not even when the *Dovenby* sprang a leak for'ard and we worked at the pumps for a forty-eight-hour stretch to prevent the incoming water rising amongst the bottom tiers of the cargo. Taking reluctant pity on our slavery, Fegan instructed Iredale to serve us a tot of Hollands gin every four hours. But we never even got a whiff of the stuff; he drank it all himself; and it put him in a bellicose mood, so that he raved at us for a slack-backed pack of shirkers. But as he wasn't a *real* mate, only a preventer, Chamberlain hit him under the jaw and sent him clucking to the mush-filled scuppers.

Soon afterward, however, the real mate turned up—stark old Perkins, our older tyrant, and no liberties could be taken with him. He used to snarl at us for being putty-soft, but I noticed he bought a giant oil-stove for his own cabin and kept it at full blast—on ship's paraffin. So work, bitter, relentless, heart-breaking, continued. Very occasionally we were allowed ashore for a spell—on Sundays, perhaps, with the usual three marks for pocket-money. We patronised the dance-halls and flamboyant cafés where the dollymops flocked in their hundreds; but they had no use for three-mark sea-boys; anyway, it was the warmth, the light, and the steaming coffee and sticky cakes that we hankered after, and I'm not playing hypocrite in saying so. Then the dock-strike ended, and to some extent we were relieved of our bitter servitude, until some of the returned workers complained that the nubbly, granite-hard sacks were too difficult to handle and went on temporary strike again—for more pay. We were sent down to fill the breach, and the old sad torment continued.

Evidently my letters home—smuggled to avoid Fegan's sneaking censorship—drew blood, for a glorious money-order arrived to my address. It was for five honest pounds, the gift of an elderly aunt, the identical old lady who had entreated the Almighty to grant me a change of heart when I vowed that only a sea-life would satisfy me! Money beyond the dreams of avarice in 1897, when the pound was worth twenty shillings sterling,

and had the spending-power of five or six pounds to-day. I should have cherished it, spending sparsely. I did nothing of the sort.

Next Sunday when shore-leave was allowed I invited the half-deck crowd to accompany me ashore. It was necessary to get the money-order cashed. Shoregoing wasn't easy, with a frozen harbour, and the ferry-boats running through the channels carved by the powerful ice-breakers. Furthermore, it meant shaking every pair of pants we possessed to obtain the few pfennigs necessary for ferry-fare, as Fegan had locked the treasury and sourly refused even the meagre three-mark dole, suspecting from our hilarity that one or other of us had been recipient of riches. Anyway, we got ashore.

Food and drink were first considerations. I boarded a tram to travel to the Stefansplatz, where the head post-office was sited. When the sword-armed conductor came for the fare, I gave him a ten-pfennig piece, and besought him to stop at the Stefansplatz, the big main square of the handsome city, for Hamburg was handsome then. He tendered five pfennigs change—a halfpenny fare, my modern readers!—which I patronisingly told him in my execrable German to keep, '*für ein glassen lager!*' He looked at least like a Field-Marshal. He engaged me in informative conversation, pointing out the features of interest *en route*. He halted the tram at the appointed place, escorted me to the post-office, and transacted the complicated business of securing cash for the money-order, then clicked heels and gave me a grand or royal salute, and departed. The tram had been left untended for ten minutes. But what of it? I got a handsome five pfennigs' worth of civility and aid!

So we ran the rag down, as windship say-so went. I doubt if twenty-five pounds to-day would buy the fun we got for five. We ate to repletion. Our drinking-habits were modest—myself a strict teetotaller; five-pfennig bocks sufficed the others. We did everything that was on offer. We danced, we visited music-halls. In one we heard a broken-down British comedian sing 'Glorious Beer.' He afterwards came to our table and tried to cadge ten marks—to keep his wife and family from starving, so he pleaded. He was a disgusting specimen, and we righteous imperialists considered him a disgrace to his nationality, which was advertised by a Union Jack worn in place of a dress-shirt.

The long and short of it was—the five pounds' worth of marks ebbed out tragically. We were actually left with only a few pfennigs for ferry-hire. We'd had a rip-roaring time, of course, and had drawn a considerable handful of other sea-boys into our net as we progressed. And we'd even remembered to buy a new oil-lamp for the half-deck, since the old one had been wrecked in a spontaneous rough-house the night before.

TRY as her skipper might, the ferry-boat couldn't crash a way through the foot-thick ice that had covered the harbour after the ice-breaker had passed at sunset. The temperature must have been something like fifty below zero; and there was no shelter. A few steam-pipes crossed the frozen deck, and we hugged them like long-lost brothers. Even so, we were like grotesque ice-statues when the skipper dramatically declared he would have to attempt to return to the landing-stage. He'd certainly done his best, backing, stopping, driving full speed ahead, crashing into the ice like a tornado, but it was no use. We, remembering our empty pockets, entreated him to try again, which he did. When that essay failed, we suggested landing on the frozen field and attempting to walk to our distant ship, but the idea was vetoed by the skipper himself, who said an impassable stretch of water lay between us and the *Dovenby*, on the far side of the ice.

Put ashore at the stage, we wondered what to do. It was after midnight. Deserted streets offered no welcome. The beer-halls were shut down. 'I know,' said Chamberlain. He had a commanding manner even then. He appreciated the situation like an admiral. 'Follow me,' he instructed. We did, shivering like beaten puppies. He led us straight to that resplendent hotel where Toby and I had sojourned. We were accorded a royal reception—with less than half-a-mark between us! The best the house offered was at our disposal: a piping-hot meal, including oyster stew—its memory tantalises me to this day!—two-inch-thick steaks, and lager in stone flagons. We thawed out over that Gargantuan meal, but, even so, the superheated bedrooms were none too warm for our chilled bodies. The same grateful warmth that had greeted Toby and myself was there, the high-piled flock beds, the glowing stove. I shared Chamberlain's room.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

'How do you suppose we're going to pay for it?' I asked.

'We'll manage,' said this man of the world loftily. And after a long reviving sleep and a breakfast to make Porthos himself envious, we did.

The joint bill was offered to Chamberlain, as senior. 'Oh, send it to Captain Fegan of the *Dovenby*,' he said, as he waved it aside. And Captain Fegan of the *Dovenby* had to pay the score! He didn't like it. His hatred of premium-paying cadets was phenomenal. He resented their existence, thinking they stood in the way of honest Irish clodhoppers, who could fudge through their exams with a lot of luck, and perhaps a bit of favouritism from the examining powers! A recent letter from a reader who appears to have enjoyed these rambling reminiscences of mine states that the writer joined the *Dovenby* for her maiden voyage, before my time. The first thing Fegan noticed on taking over command was a brass-plate over the half-deck door, reading: 'Midshipmen's Quarters.' 'Rip that off,' he roared. 'Paint "Boys"—that's good enough for the swabsters!'

EVEN so, being a second voyager was good fun. There were newcome first voyagers

to be patronised and shown the ropes, with all the affectations of seniority accompanying the explanations. 'Hi, Shaw, take a couple of those boys and . . .' was a regular order from the poop.

The last of that forsaken nitre was ashore, a cargo of coke was tumbled into our gaping holds, the leak having been repaired by the simple expedient of sending a diver under the bottom, who shoved a bolt attached to a small steel plate through the hole, which bolt was screwed fast from inside the bilge. Then the newly-signed-on crew came aboard, and I, with my fellow second voyagers, was entrusted with responsible tasks—sailorising jobs. To the polyglot seamen—as mixed a bag as ever joined ship under the Red Ensign, I fancy—I was no longer the ignorant tyro; I was classed among them as an *équal*.

As the *Dovenby* cast off her hold-fasts and started down the still-icy Elbe in wake of a powerful Hamburg tug, came a call from the poop: 'Send Shaw aft to the wheel! We want a helmsman who knows his job!' True, most of the deck-hands were suddenly intoxicated on their month's advance-notes; but that hail from aft established me as a genuine second voyager, a capable hand—for steering a towed ship down the tortuous river was a full-sized man's job.

Why?

*The earth is old,
Though I can see
The world is as
It used to be
When everything
Was strange to me.*

*But many years
As such have gone
Since first this earth
I stood upon,
Yet still the day
Is new at dawn.*

*So ageless Time
Does not destroy
The mystery
That thrills a boy,
The wonderment
Which asks me why?*

JAMES MACALPINE.

Memories of Malaya

SACHA CARNEGIE

UNTIL I visited Malaya I knew nothing of the country. A long narrow peninsula pointing down to the equator. From it came rubber and tin; there were planters who lived colourful lives amid exotic surroundings; the Malay women were beautiful and the men carried a wavy-bladed knife called a kris. That much I had gleaned from the short stories of Somerset Maugham, by whose pen the East is so vividly portrayed. The other day I reread some of these stories and memories of an Eastern interlude flooded my mind. I went to Malaya as a soldier, and a soldier in his professional capacity is inclined to get certain views of a country which as a tourist he might possibly miss.

It was a strange experience, novel to say the least of it, that hunting of will-o'-the-wisp bandits in the jungle. Wily, vicious men who vanished silently to their camps, which lay perhaps some two or three miles from the jungle edge. Two to three miles. Three or four days march to an unknown goal. A problematical pinpoint on the smug surface of a map. One last look at the sky, then plunge into the towering wall of the jungle. Moving slowly, laboriously, through a dim green twilight, a cathedral gloom where you rarely see the sun save as sword-blades cutting to golden strips the tangled foliage, trickling down the creepers to collect in bright pools on the leaf-mould underfoot.

At first there are tracks—of pig, elephant, other troops. Some are bandit courier tracks winding for hundreds of miles through the jungles, a network connecting Johore and Pahang and Selangor. Northwards to Perak and the borders of Siam. Along these northern tracks, many of them cut by the British guerrilla leaders in the last war, undoubtedly come arms, equipment, and recruits. But usually the track peters out, turns east instead of west.

Then begins the nightmare. The snail-like blundering through the tangled chaos of creepers and thick spiny stems, the tall ferns, the rustling attap palms, over the fallen trees, huge and dust-rotten—for beneath the lush beauty everything is rotten—astir with red ants, great bulbous spiders. Ahead is the sound of chopping, relentless exhausting blows of the machetes, slicing through the sticky wet stems, the sinewy tendrils, dislodging at every stroke a shower of hungry insects that fall on sweat-soaked skin and irritate almost beyond endurance. Ridge after ridge, steep and matted. Crawl up, slither down into the hollows where run brown streams, often, after rain, foaming torrents. In the stagnant air is the overpowering smell of new-growing vegetation. For out of the rottenness springs life almost as you watch. Overblown, luxuriant life, conceived in the womb of a steaming oven, growing, twining, sprouting in fantastic confusion.

Struggle to the top of yet another ridge, below are several streams where the map shows but one. The compass, that true friend, points the direction in an eerie world where there are no landmarks, no red-roofed houses or bushy-topped trees to aid the harassed leader. Along the razor-backed ridge for two hours, then down to the streams, to where boots sink knee-deep in slime, and leeches, pinheads waving blindly, scent flesh. Upwards they wriggle, unseen, unfelt, to fix themselves and gorge, till bloated and purple they shrivel to the touch of a cigarette-tip. A swamp. No way round. Black gurgling water chest-high, feet blundering among waterlogged vegetation, the stench of decay overpowering. There seems to be no end to the painful progress. The green walls press ever closer, the green ceiling lowers, the air is stifling and alive with the whirr and buzz of a myriad insects. Then suddenly you break

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

into a clearing on top of a high ridge and on every side you see the jungle-covered mountains, the darkest and lightest of greens, with here and there a hint of purple, little wisps of mist writhing in the hollows. In the open the heat is intense. Thankfully you plunge once more into the cloistered shade.

MIDDAY on the bank of a river; broad brown flood dancing with heat, somehow to be crossed. Kingfishers, streaks of brilliant blue, flash low over the water. On the far bank pigs rootle in the undergrowth. The murmur of the river sounds cool. That is the technicolor jungle of exotic ferns and gorgeous crimson flowers and fabulous butterflies which hover in the scorching air. But it is the other, the dank gloomy cauldron that is the real jungle. The jungle of sweat and exhaustion and the incessant sounds of animal life you never see. Of thorns and mud and needle-stabbing insects. Huge hornets, named so aptly 'flying kitbags,' zoom low in tight banking turns. Sometimes a snake rustles across the track, gaily-coloured and lethal. Cross the river on a fallen tree and as you slip and sway, overburdened with equipment, you think of crocodiles. On the other side, the Iban tracker, from Sarawak, and by inclination a head-hunter, casts about for a track, finds one. His flat brown face creases with pleasure beneath the tattoo-marks. Easier going till nightfall.

Night in the deep jungle smothers like a black curtain and with it usually comes the rain, its approach a solid roar, falling like a cataract on the roof of the forest, drumfire on the little shelters, passing on to leave a coolness in the air and everywhere the drip of water. Thunder growls and mutters among the mountains, tropical lightning of unbelievable intensity flares and silvers the huge tree-trunks. Often they are struck and fall with monstrous crash. You lie in the flimsy shelter of poles and poncho-capes and stare into the dripping blackness. Dawn will not come for twelve hours, and the only lights to be seen are the fireflies, which pursue erratic courses and have at times been mistaken for torches by sleepy sentries. The light is in their tails. One wonders how they see to travel.

It is very true to say that at night the jungle becomes alive. Monkeys whoop and by the streams and in the swamps the giant bullfrogs boom. All around is a rustling, a whispering,

and a murmuring. Screeches. Whistles. High-pitched yells. Grunts and queer clicking sounds. They are from far away. Then they seem to come from right by your head. Above it all the monotonous, nerve-racking saw-whine of the mosquitoes. Later, in the small hours, silence falls, and then it is uncanny. It is cold by now and a pale wash of moonlight filters through the leaves. Somewhere, not far away, in the next valley even, there may be another camp where the bandits lie and plan more mischief.

THE bandit jungle-camps are often not found until too late, when, without warning, a patrol stumbles upon a clearing where a few rotting huts, some brown mouldering rice, scattered paper, gnawed pig-bones, and the ashes of a long-dead fire show that men had lived there. They had gone. To another camp. Ten miles away? One mile? Two hundred yards? Warily the patrol turns upon its tracks for the long trek back. But sometimes there may be a sudden burst of automatic fire, deadly clatter echoing very loud in the valleys, shouts from beyond the foliage overhanging the path, and the glimpse of a running figure, crouching low. The bandits slip away into the undergrowth, as quick as snakes, as difficult to find. Large camps are sited with considerable ingenuity and may never be located. One such, built for three hundred men, was on an island in the midst of swamps, approached by a solitary causeway many miles in length, formed of logs submerged to escape detection from the air.

Stand at the summit of a mountain, look out across the green sea and marvel that somewhere hidden lie armed camps where hundreds of men and women are trained and prepared for the day when the white man shall be expelled from Asia. Like any sea, it hides its secrets well. I have stood where thousand-pound bombs had fallen on the jungle, and seen nothing but scattered scars on the trees, a few splintered branches. In the sprawling depths untold thousands could creep away and hide. Hardly ever, for instance, do you see the Sakai, the timid little jungle-dwellers who hunt their food with blowpipes and whose villages are raided by the bandits for food. There are elephants, an occasional glimpse of a broad grey behind vanishing into bamboo, deer and pigs and tigers, monkeys and magnificently-plumaged birds, but rarely are

MEMORIES OF MALAYA

they seen. Small wonder then that cunning men are able to remain hidden and that contacts in the jungle are so comparatively few.

In the rubber it is different, for there, among the open ranks of slender pale-grey trees, movement is simpler, vision greater. On the outskirts of some estates the rubber is overgrown, returned to secondary jungle; trees are untapped and between them flourishes thick high scrub named belukar. Camps are to be found in such areas. Small camps near streams. Min Yuen—Fifth Column—camps. Informers and surrendered bandits lead the troops, and in the misty dawn the trap is sprung. A lean-to shelter, cooking-pots on the breakfast fire, a hoard of food, medical supplies, blankets, pamphlets, red-starred caps. Two or three running figures in khaki or black. Brief bursts of firing. 'Look out, there may be more!' And it is over. Dead bodies swinging limply from poles as the victors return triumphant to base. But more often an empty morning and slowly home past the tappers, who free the milky latex with hooked knives, and gaze with expressionless eyes at the soldiers. Perhaps one of them shouts, a shout taken up by the next one and the next, on into the distance till it reaches the ears of bandits and they, warned of danger in the vicinity, vanish silently. Afternoon in the rubber is a deserted, sinister time, for the tappers have gone and there is nothing but the heat and the loud reports of falling branches. Search the empty smokehouse, investigate the Chinese kongsi house in the valley, where children play in the dusty sunlight, an old man spits contemptuously, mongrel curs cringe and bark. Check identity cards, on which every slit-eyed face appears identical. Move on. Back to camp. Every movement of the military noted and passed on. The Communist intelligence is sharp and uncanny as bush-telegraph. The Chinese are rightly called inscrutable. They, like the jungle, give away few secrets.

BUT there are other sides to Malaya, moments when the latent savagery and lurking suspicion are forgotten. The cool breeze of evening, fanning away the heat of the day. Playing badminton, that most wily of games, as the purple rain-clouds pile low over the mountains, giving way at sunset to ragged streamers incandescent at the edges.

The tumbled skyline of forest becomes for a brief moment aflame, then the sun has gone in a black and crimson inferno splashed across the western sky. Girls working in the dappled shade of banana-trees, their bodies tawny in the sunlight. Little black Tamil children splashing in the Selangor river. Malay houses raised on piles above thealang grass, bright-coloured sarongs hanging out to dry. The slip-slap of bare feet as the tappers bring in their brimming pails of latex. Toucans flying high above the jungle, making with their wings the same sound as wild swans. Briggs, the baby monkey, whose mother I so wantonly shot as she played in the trees, and who became as spoilt and domineering as any child.

A drive along Slim River. The sight of water-buffalo rising repulsive from their mud-baths. The smell of kampong cooking-fires fragrant in the morning air. The sun already burning up the mists, and turning leaves to copper tint in the glaring green.

Curry tiffin at the local planter's bungalow, situated on a small hill bright with scarlet hibiscus and flowering shrubs. As you sat on the shaded verandah you saw through the barbed-wire stockade silent regiments of rubber-trees marching away into the valley. In the moonlight they would be rows of bleached skeletons, and to the Malay sentries every shadow would appear to move. Drinking on that same verandah when the rain has come and gone and soon the night would hide the mountains, the jungle, the wide rivers, the countless little streams, the swamps, and the villages. Chinese music wailing from the village, the gentle whirr of fans, the air heavy with the scent of tropical flowers, an almond-eyed Chinese boy bringing drinks. That was the Malaya of story and imagination. The mystic East. But in camps hidden from that jewelled sky men would be cursing the boredom of the long dark hours, the dampness of their blankets, slapping at the mosquitoes, unable to show lights or read or play cards, and to the Communists in their hideouts there was little romance in the sight of tree-trunks turned to marble pillars by a high-riding moon.

There are many other things which I should like to include. Bathing from a palm-girt beach. Malay dancers, figures of superb grace in the lamplight. Chinese food eaten by the edge of the sea, the lights of Singapore twinkling beyond the bay, junks moored close

inshore, and low in the sky the Southern Cross. The Kanching Pass, tortuous and treacherous, where buses were so frequently ambushed and burnt. Tamil pig-hunters in loincloths, carrying broad-bladed spears and a basket for the bristle-backed corpse. The flocks of small green parrots that flew over our tents every evening with a swish and loud chatter. Rats walking up the guy-ropes and filling the tent

with their devilish squeaks. Enough. To know Malaya you need a lifetime, to portray its people, its moods, its fascination, you would need the pages of a book. Facts and figures, strategy and opinions, I have omitted, leaving them to others eminently more capable and knowledgeable. It has been enough to recapture, even so fleetingly, a few memories of a strange, mysterious land.

The Curse of Noise

WILLIAM WINTERSETT

IN any part of Britain you might happen to come upon a closed van standing outside some house or flat, with wires passing from it through an open window. Possibly you might take it for some travelling electrical-testing outfit, but actually it is a Mobile Acoustics Laboratory belonging to the Building Research Station at Watford.

Wherever it goes, the tenants are apt to crowd round it and air their complaints. One housewife declares that nobody can get a wink of sleep, what with the knocking and banging in the flat above. Another says that the radio and the loud voices on the other side of the partition wall are driving her silly.

Noise, it seems, is becoming more and more of an aggravation. Surveys of opinion show that about one family in four living in terraced or semi-detached houses is disturbed by noise from neighbours. In flats the noise nuisance is even worse. In the older type of flats the percentage of complaints is about 35, while among those living in flats built after 1930 it is as high as 57.

The problem, of course, goes back a long way into the past. Although the earliest official mention of sound insulation was in a Government report on housing in 1844, which recommended the use of lime-pugged floors for working-class houses, these pugged floors

had already been in use for at least two centuries. To deaden the sound three or four inches of lime was laid on some sort of tray between the floor-joists. The early builders also laid floor-boards on a mattress of reeds. A floor in Hampton Court Palace, built under the direction of Wren, was pugged with cockle-shells, probably reflecting some acoustic theory of those days.

Pugged floors were laid until well into the 19th century, as was shown when floors were uncovered by the Blitz, but changing social habits and the crowding of towns caused a growing volume of complaint from noise sufferers.

'Men of ingenuity, lend us your ears,' wrote the editor of *The Builder* in 1857, 'there is no greater nuisance in modern houses than that of the transmission of sound through party-walls.' He went on to describe his sufferings in a London house next door to noisy neighbours. 'They are musical, and I must confess labour most industriously at the scales: morning, noon and night one or other child howls and strums, apparently without making any progress.' He ended by saying that people were being driven to take corner sites so as to be free from noise at least on one side.

Twenty years before this, the prison author-

THE CURSE OF NOISE

ities had approached the great Faraday to find some method of sound insulation so that prisoners could not talk to each other through the walls. This was the first truly scientific approach to the problem. Following Faraday's suggestion of building walls with air-spaces, they were so far successful in blanketing sounds that they considered attempts to speak through the walls would be 'an effort at once so painful and exhausting that the agent would feel the continued exertion of it almost as a punishment.'

IT was not, however, until the 1920's that the appalling din of modern cities, coupled with a big programme of post-war building, caused scientific bodies to study sound insulation methodically. By 1939 our own experts had worked out a technique which was probably superior to that in any other country. To-day, with the roar of aircraft added to the other irritating sounds, intensive efforts are being made to put this knowledge into practice. Hence, among other things, the Mobile Acoustics Laboratory, which was built in 1948 from an R.A.F. surplus vehicle.

In a house or flat it has to measure two sorts of sounds. The first is the airborne kind, which includes such things as loud voices, radio, and yelling babies. These are reproduced synthetically by loudspeakers which warble, and what can be heard through a wall or a floor is measured by a microphone. It is measured in decibels, which is now the internationally recognised unit of sound. Ordinary talk is from about 40 to 50 decibels, a noisy typing-room 70 to 80, a pneumatic-drill is 90, and a jet-plane about 145.

The second sort is impact sounds, such as bangings, footsteps, and moving furniture. To measure how much of this comes through, a footsteps machine delivers blows on the floor with brass or rubber hammers to simulate hard or soft shoes, and again the loudness is measured in an adjoining room. It seems that footstep noises are the most common grounds of complaint, perhaps partly because no less than half the families in Great Britain do their own shoe repairs.

THE next thing is how to deal with these nuisances. One of the most effective methods is to put in a floating concrete floor. A one-inch thickness of glass-wool is laid

over a concrete sub-floor, and on top of it is laid either another layer of concrete or a board-and-batten floor. Another is to have a suspended ceiling of plaster hung on metal hangers. These devices are equal in effect to a thick carpet with underfelt. But a wooden-joist floor is a much more difficult matter than a concrete one, and so far all that can be done is to make it about as soundproof as an untreated concrete floor.

Walls are not considered nearly such a problem, but now that builders are putting in much thinner partition walls they may very likely become so. The remedies in this case are air-spaces inside the walls, or, if the house has already been built, sound-insulating panels of materials such as eelgrass, which at one time was used to silence the underground railways.

Up to date, about 90 per cent of the complaints are of noises indoors. Sounds coming from outside, it seems, do not irritate people nearly so much; in fact, they actually welcome incoming sounds because they are 'company.' However, this does not apply to everyone. It has been found that people vary enormously in their tolerance of noise and that some, whom the doctors call cerebrotomics, can easily be upset to the point of nervous breakdown.

Recently the National Physical Laboratory conducted some experiments to discover how different people were affected by noise. One hundred volunteers sat in a soundproof room and were subjected to a series of different sounds transmitted through loudspeakers. Most people begin to suffer severely at about 120 decibels, but some of the volunteers, it was found, could not bear sounds of much lower intensity.

The sounds were made as impersonal as possible, because it is known that the mental associations make a great difference. Wet leaves dripping into a still pond are pleasant to the ear, but a dripping tap is quite another matter. The physical sensations of loudness do not depend exactly on the amount of energy put into the sounds. Some people suffer agonies from their wives or husbands snoring, and in America this has even been advanced as grounds for a divorce.

But there is no doubt that noise affects less sensitive people too. In one office where the surroundings were properly insulated against noise the typing errors fell by 29 per cent and the speed of work went up 12 per cent. One

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

of the Big Five banks is making sound surveys in all its branches and doing everything possible in its new buildings to deaden interior sounds, so that its clients will not be disturbed by the clatter of typewriters and calculating-machines.

LORD HORDER said recently that we were dying in greater numbers from functional diseases such as coronary thrombosis, arteriosclerosis, and diabetes, and that insanity was on the increase. In all these maladies, he added, noise played a part with its evil effects on our nervous systems.

At one end of the scale are the sounds which irritate us because they can only just be heard. Everyone knows the agony of lying awake listening to the mouse whose scratchings are barely audible. Some years ago a case was tried in court in which a sound-expert tried to convince the jury that the plaintiff was being sorely tried by a refrigeration plant which he could only just hear. At the other end is the roar of industrial plants, motor-cycles, and now helicopters and jet-planes.

Not long ago a man nearly succeeded in getting an injunction against a neighbouring steel-works on account of noise. Probably the only thing which prevented him from succeeding was the danger of a shutdown affecting the national effort. It may be that the Government has warned manufacturers that they must guard against excessive noise, because makers of cars, refrigerating equipment, and other things are now beginning to use noise-meters in their factories, both to make their products more silent and to take steps to deaden the outgoing noise. Possibly, too, they have an eye on the comfort and efficiency of their workers.

The roar of road traffic does not seem to be a principal cause of complaint among householders unless they happen to live close to a main road. The building experts say they can do little about it except by fitting double window-panes and asking the tenants to keep their windows perpetually shut. A motor-horn at close quarters is no less than 110 decibels. Worse still are the motor-cycles, which, so the engineers say, could easily be made much more silent if a law were enforced. In Germany the police carry noise-meters, on the evidence of which they can charge an offending motor-cyclist.

Worst of all are the helicopters and jet-

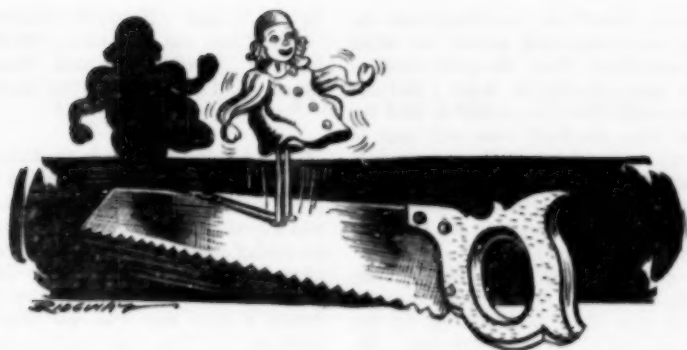
planes. A chorus of complaint has arisen from Londoners due to the helicopters which land and take off on the south bank of the Thames. Jet helicopters will soon be in use and a regular service of 6-seater 'whirly birds' from London. In response to public complaints, the Ministry of Supply says that silencers for helicopters are showing encouraging results. Their main efforts, however, are concentrated on subduing the roar and whistle of jet-planes.

The noise of jets is now the loudest of all industrial noises, and we are only at the beginning of the Jet Age. According to American doctors, even the lungs are affected by it. In June of last year a farmer suffered so severely from the noise of jets that he took out a writ alleging common nuisance against the Hawker Company. Within twelve hours the Ministry of Civil Aviation countered by issuing an Order in Council forbidding a civilian to sue an aircraft firm on such a plea!

Meanwhile the Ministry of Supply is taking vigorous action. A leading firm of engine-makers has been given a government contract to carry out research work into the noise of aircraft. Jet-planes are to be operated with different kinds of nozzles, to discover the best shape for deadening the sound. Already, it is claimed, toothed and corrugated nozzles have given promising results.

Another method which will be tested is to inject water into the jet-stream. Mufflers to blanket the roar of grounded aircraft when running up are being tried, and the Ministry has placed contracts for mufflers of two different types. Tests and research work are going on at the College of Aeronautics and at Manchester and Edinburgh Universities. Last year the Supply Ministry spent £100,000 on noise, compared with £40,000 the year before.

At the same time it is possible that noise will become a part of children's education. Sheldon, an American psychiatrist, has made tests on 40 children over periods up to 4 years and has found that only 9 of them were really noisy. Out of 80 schoolboys he discovered that the din came almost entirely from only 20 of them. In adult life the same thing holds good. At big league baseball games the noise was made by only 10 per cent of the crowd. It is thought that proper training at home and at school may in time reduce the noisy minority almost to vanishing-point.



The Dancing Doll

MARGARET BAILEY

JANUARY, month of the two-faced god, is, at best, a dismal time of the year. True, there are the optimists who, whenever the shortest day is over, declare that the days are drawing out already. But that January afternoon, as I walked home from school, I could detect little sign of drawing out, though the shortest day was three weeks behind us.

Half-a-dozen of us had cycled together as far as the village, but I was the only one for Birkside, and, as was my custom in winter, I had left my bicycle at the joiner's and was taking the so-called short-cut through the wood and along the field-side. In my throat was the metallic taste of carbide gas from the bicycle-lamp I carried, and in my heart the superstitious fears that beset a lonely child in the oncoming of the dark.

But I put a bold face on things, and hummed a tune as I walked. It was a light-hearted tune we had learned that day in the French class, a light-hearted tune with light-hearted words about people dancing on a bridge, and I even smiled to myself as I tried to picture such a thing happening on our Scottish roadway. Still humming, still smiling, I felt suddenly the touch of a cold, soft finger on my cheek. I shivered, as one does after too little sleep, or when one is afraid.

Last night my grandfather, with whom I had lived for the past seven years, had ceased the broken mutterings of delirium, and had lapsed into unconsciousness. All day I had striven, successfully, to push into the background of my mind the memory of his noisy breathing, the awfulness of his half-closed eyes. Now I was alone. I was alone, and I was afraid.

The finger touched me again, on my brow this time, and a soft trickle ran down over my temple. The oncome the ploughmen had been foretelling for days past was here—the first snow of that winter.

As I turned the corner into the mains, a voice came at me from the shadows of the cartshed. It was Jamie Fairbairn, the orra laddie. 'Your grandfither's deid. You're tae gaun roond tae Mrs Craik's.'

THE thing that impressed me most about Mrs Craik's was the way I was immediately the centre of attention. Blackie and Grayson were put off the easy-chair so that I might occupy it, and I was urged to pull it up close to the big range. I knelt down on the rug, however, and soothed the cats until, mollified, they returned to their cushion.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Meanwhile, Mrs Craik was slicing ham, the kind that looks deep pink, almost red, when it is raw, so different from the pallid flank or cheek we generally had at home. She cut slowly, very thin slices that curled up over the knife, and then she fried them with eggs in the big pan on the range. There were, too, shortbread biscuits, only faintly coloured, and dusted with fine sugar, and oven-scones and pan-bread. I could hardly wait for Willie to come in so that we might begin.

Willie was intensely interested in my homework, and careful that I should have my chair at the side of the table nearest the fire with the lamp set to my best advantage. He himself had writing to do, a sort of record of work in respect of each farmhand. His writing was thin, steeply-sloped, very careful. Looking back, I am inclined to think that we showed off a bit to each other, Willie and I, he with his time-sheets, I with my homework. Perhaps his wife smiled as she saw him adjust his steel-rimmed spectacles the better to observe my demonstration of the mysteries of algebra.

When Willie had gone out to shut up the barns and stable for the night, I asked Mrs Craik if I should go home now, but she said she thought not to-night. We did not speak of my grandfather, but I knew why I was being kept out of the way. Mrs Gillies would have been in to 'dress' the body. The necessary garments and the best linen sheets were wrapped in strong brown-paper, securely tied, and labelled: 'What is needed.' The parcel was kept in the old man's kist, in whose shottles were the few valuables he possessed—a sovereign and a half-sovereign, souvenirs of his golden wedding; Old Buchan, the venerable large watch that had been his grandfather's; the razor he used for his corns; and a sharpening-stone worn so thin in the middle that you marvelled it did not break in half.

When we heard Willie banging his boots on the side of the big stone in which the scraper was set, we knew the snow must be lying. We heard him swear softly as a piece of hard snow on his heel caused him to slip in the long stone passage, and, when he had hung up his keys and come into the kitchen again, he told us there was a good inch. 'The sky's

fu' o't,' he said. 'If only the wind no' rises—'

Mrs Craik cut him short, which was not her way. 'Willie,' she said, 'you aye promised you'd show Marget the dancing doll.'

THE dancing doll was in the kist, so I knew Willie valued it, but, when he brought it out, for the life of me I could not see why. It was a loosely-jointed wooden figure dressed in the sort of clothes any child would condemn at once, because they were sewn on. Then it had, in lieu of lower legs and feet, two large nails driven a little way into the thighs. And, worst of all, there was another nail driven through its clothes into the middle of its back.

Willie was not deceived by my polite show of interest: no doubt my face showed my disappointment. At all events, he did not linger over this part of the proceedings. Carrying the doll, he padded off in his stockinged feet to the pantry, and returned with the saw. My interest flared up, and I sat down on the big steel fender to await developments. Willie seated himself on a plain wooden chair, with the handle end of the saw secured under him by his own weight, and the pliant blade protruding in front. Then, holding the doll by the nail in her back, he stood her lightly on the blade of the saw, and began to whistle, with laborious breathing between the lines, the tune of the Circassian circle.

As Willie whistled, he kept time with his free hand on the saw, and the doll began to dance. Never was dancer more sprightly, more nimble, more exquisitely in time. Whenever Willie's breath threatened to give out, I urged: 'Go on. Dinna stop!'

But at last Willie could whistle no more. 'Go on you now,' he panted.

So I sang for the dancing doll the tune we had learned in the French class that day, the tune whose words tell of people dancing on a bridge. And the little doll, because she had magic in her, made me forget the cottage down the hill, so that, when I carried the pink lamp to the bedroom where I was to sleep alone, I was still humming, and picturing to myself fine gentlemen who made the reverence to fine ladies. And my dreams that night were of orange-groves and sunshine and music for dancing.

Mysteries of Naval Slang

A. C. ROSE

OCCASIONALLY a new book of seamen's expressions appears on the market and the usual result is that a number of letters are written to nautical publications contradicting much of what the author has said. There are, indeed, a good many arguments, both in and out of print, concerning the origin and true interpretation of many expressions still in use in the Royal Navy and these arguments could, in most cases, have been avoided if some naval chronicler had set the expressions down at their time of origin.

A case in point is the controversy which revolves around the origin of the term 'ticklers,' a word which to any person who has had contact with the Royal Navy signifies service-issue tobacco. In recent years the belief has gained ground that this expression originated from the fact that early issue tobacco was so harsh that it tickled the throat, but many older naval pensioners insist that its derivation is in fact quite different. They explain that the original nickname 'ticklers' was given to jam supplied in tins by a firm of jam-makers known as Tickler, and that thereafter all food, etc., supplied in similar tins was referred to as 'ticklers.' When, eventually, tobacco was supplied in tins it received the same name, which, for some reason, has stuck.

It would perhaps be difficult to reach a conclusive decision on this point, and it would, therefore, be just as well, in order to prevent future argument, to put into print some of the expressions which have come into use in the Royal Navy in recent years, and which show every sign of becoming permanent.

LET us begin with a subject beloved by many sailors—rum. A sailor's daily ration, one-eighth of a pint, is still known as a tot, and to receive a gift of either the whole

or part of it constitutes no mean compliment. A sip of a rating's rum indicates that he is grateful for something you have done for him, or that he likes you, or is extremely pleased to see you. Such a gift is known as 'sippers.' An even greater compliment is often paid in the form of 'gulpers,' which means that the recipient is expected to take a large swallow; but to be offered a tot accompanied by the expression 'downers' indicates that the donor holds one in the highest possible esteem.

'Winger' is another word which has come to stay, but many young sailors are now apt to confuse it with the older term 'raggie.' Their meanings are, in fact, quite different, and it would be as well to give briefly the derivation and meaning of both.

'Raggie' dates from the time when it was common practice to stow cleaning and polishing rags in a bag, each man possessing his own bag. It sometimes happened, however, that friends shared a bag, and these individuals were called 'raggies.' Later it became the fashion to refer to all sets of friends as 'raggies.' Incidentally, the well-known expression 'parting brass rags' finds its origin here, for it was natural when bag-sharers fell out that the owner of the bag told the other to take his rags out of his bag.

A 'winger' is quite a different thing. A person so termed is usually a young sailor who is taken under the wing of an older man, and the expression is often used cynically. In such a relationship the older partner is sometimes referred to as a 'sea daddy' or, more commonly, 'the old man.'

Modern seamen rarely say that they are 'fed up' or 'browned off.' They are usually 'two blocks' or 'chocker,' and these expressions are probably the most truly nautical of those which have come into use of late years. The position occupied by the blocks or pulleys of a hauling-tackle when it has

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

reached its limit of usefulness obviously provides the origin of these strange terms. When a tackle is used to lift or move a load, the block which is attached to the load gradually moves to another non-moving block as the load is pulled up. Eventually the blocks come to rest against each other and further hoisting is impossible as the tackle has reached its limit. This state of affairs is referred to in naval parlance as 'two blocks' or 'chock-a-block.' Thus it is easy to deduce that a sailor who is 'two blocks' has reached his limit, and that the term 'chocker' is an abbreviation of 'chock-a-block.'

THE term 'custard tank' came into being roughly about the time that large ships in the Royal Navy changed over from canteen messing to general messing—that is to say, when, instead of each individual mess choosing and preparing its own meals, leaving only the actual cooking to be done in the galley, the selection of weekly menus for the whole of the ship's company was taken over by the paymaster, and both preparing and cooking were carried out by the galley staff.

In order to cope with the provision of a set meal for such a large number, it became necessary to prepare soups, beverages, etc., in large tank-like receptacles, and in large ships of the present day enormous pieces of kitchenware containing custard for the midday sweet are by no means an uncommon sight. It is not surprising, therefore, that men of the smaller ships are apt to refer to large vessels as 'custard tanks.'

A simple meal of roast-meat and potatoes is often served under the name of 'straight bake' or 'straight rush,' and, although to the uninitiated these terms appear to be absolutely inexplicable, they are, in fact, the products of plain common-sense. In ships in which canteen messing is still in force it falls to the lot of each member of the mess in turn to prepare the meals for the day, and it is a fairly safe bet that when this duty lights on a young or inexperienced member the midday meal will be roast. All that has to be done, theoretically, in preparing is to place the meat in a dish, surround it with potatoes, scatter a little salt over it, and rush it straight to the galley to be baked.

While on the subject of food, it should be mentioned that corned-beef, known for so long as 'Fanny Adams,' now makes its

appearance under the exalted title of 'pusser's (purser's) ham.' The most colourful expression, however, so far as food is concerned is the name given to tinned tomatoes, a dish invariably named 'train smash.'

For some reason best known to himself, the modern seaman never refers to the sea as such. It is either 'the drink' or 'the oggin.' It is easy to understand the reason for the former expression, but the latter, on first sight, appears a little obscure. However, the fact that the term 'hogwash' is sometimes heard gives some clue as to its derivation.

No sailor worthy of his salt will forgive a civilian the mistake of referring to a ship as a boat, and yet present-day seamen reserve the right to apply this term to a particular class of vessel. To them a destroyer is never a destroyer; it is a 'boat.' The Destroyer Service is known as 'the boats,' and big-ship sailors, longing for the more free-and-easy routine of smaller ships, are often heard to remark: 'Give me the boats.' Indeed, this is fast becoming a common phrase to signify that one is fed up with red-tape.

NAVAL humour has long been in a class of its own and most lower-deck men lose no opportunity of applying it wherever possible. A typical example is the nickname given to a particular type of ship's boat which, being high in speed and shallow in draught, speeds across the water after the fashion of a dish which has been skimmed. This craft has been aptly dubbed 'the skimming dish,' and so common has this expression become that many young seamen find difficulty in recalling the official name of this kind of ship's boat.

The word 'drip' is often heard in civilian life nowadays and is used in reference to a particular type of individual. The term seems to have leaked from naval messdecks by way of wartime sailors returning home. For some years now grumblers in the Navy have been referred to as 'drip tins,' and to say that a man has 'got a drip on' means that he is grumbling about something or other.

The word 'drip' was doubtless originally used by some naval wit who meant to infer that to grumble or complain was tantamount to shedding tears, but the term was expanded to 'drip tin' later. In all ships special tins are provided to catch the drops from leaky taps, and these tins are known as drip tins. Therefore, to say that a man needed a drip tin meant

THE TANKER

that he was continually grumbling, but nowadays it is sufficient merely to speak of a 'drip tin' to be known to be describing a chronic grouser.

To be a conscientious seaman in the modern Navy is to be deemed 'all for it' or, in other words, all for the Service. To be accused of having been 'born in a pusser's blanket,' however, infers that one is 'all for it' to the point of being a bore. The inference here is that the person concerned is so steeped in tradition that he was born, not only of naval parentage, but wrapped in a naval-issue blanket into the bargain.

These are just a few instances of current naval slang. There are many more. For example, a safety-pin is a 'sick-bay shackle,' because it is often used to fasten the ends

of bandages together; a 'rub' is a loan—'give me a rub of a pound'; a 'gannet' is a man who, like the bird of that name, eats anything and everything.

There is one expression, however, which, as far as I can see, yields no clue as to its origin. This expression is 'spitcher.' Sailors use this word to indicate that a thing is finished, gone for ever, or permanently lost. An article damaged beyond repair is 'spitcher'; so is a ship which has sunk, or a person who has passed away. I once heard a senior naval officer warning new entry seamen that if, in the face of the enemy, they were not continuously efficient they would all soon be 'spitcher.' It is a most unusual word and I have no doubt that many nautical men, like me, are puzzled as to its origin.

The Tanker

ROY FAULKNER

SHE was old and uncomplaining, very, very tired, yet stoic as an old war-horse still. In the thick viscous waters of the Gulf, she groaned aloud below her decks and blew out involuntary hisses of steam with every extra thrust. Stoppages occurred. On the long voyage her system had been overtaxed and she was forced to move on before the physicians had time to catch up with all her ailments. It was a gradual decline.

She had been bested by the weather till her plates were coated thick with rust. Greasy discharges and green sea-growth gave her hull the appearance of a mackerel that has passed through a patch of mud. She was rangy, elongated, and slow.

There were none of the freighter's sprouting tufts of derricks and rigging to her decks. She resembled a gigantic river-barge, with superstructures amidships and a funnel aft; no æsthetic form; no balance of composition

which gives the passenger-liner poise—she was simply a floating tank carrying a million gallons of oil and a crew. And the crew cursed her with the savage vehemence of repressed souls. They gazed up at the brassy orb which heated the iron decks to an over-warm hundred and forty Fahrenheit and cursed the sea and all mankind. But especially they cursed the tanker. The air they inhaled fired their lungs, so they panted in short gasps, and, knowing no way of relief, trailed about with tattered shirts worn like cloaks to insulate their flesh, roaring expressions of helpless and hopeless suffering. Sometimes a man collapsed. They dragged him to a cabin and wrapped wet towels about his head.

The cooks emaciated visibly over roaring furnaces of galley stoves. Their dripping flesh melted almost as quickly as the grease in the pans. They produced roast-beef, veges, steak-pie, apple-tarts, and rice-pudding, but

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the crew had only appetite for cooling drinks and fresh air, and dreamed nostalgic dreams of iced-cold beer and the autumn mists of home.

So they blamed the tanker. Surprisingly, they blamed the Captain, too—and none knew why. But then, they blamed each other, and Heaven and Hell, but always they settled finally on the tanker. It was the town of their habitat, their home and workshop, their whole world, and against it they levelled their spite. They forgot it was a commercial production built specifically for transporting oil, and it loomed as a monster which brought them to a predicament of slow torture. More than that, they were compelled to maintain the monster, feed it, and man it. Each time the vessel's engines broke down, the sagging shoulders of engineers sagged further and their faces registered physical pain. They worked in blasts of air from superheated steam, were constantly smeared with oil and grained with dirt; rivulets of sweat traced tattoos like the warmarks of African impi. They gave their life's blood to make another hundred miles.

SO the viscous waters of the Gulf slid past, clinging to the hull and reluctant to let her push ahead. At night men lay almost naked about the decks, arms outflung and often clutching a bottle of tepid water or weak tea. Waves of night heat had stuffed their nostrils with cotton-wool and the only sound was the monstrous thump of the engines, and an occasional wheeze of pain. Heads were thick with haze, and sleep, apart from fitful spasms of slumber, was impossible. Some wandered aimlessly to and fro, not knowing for what they searched, with only an overpowering desire to get away from it all. They wandered vaguely, like drifting spirits. But there was no escape; they were imprisoned in an expanse of sea as surely as prisoners in a penitentiary.

Daylight again and the deck men worked to make the ship spick and span. They hammered at the rust with chipping hammers, clinging to samson-posts or perched on the taffrail. The rhythm was sharp and unbroken, like a woodpecker digging into bark, and the ironwork reverberated with beats. Oil from fumes in the tanks seeped through the tank covers and the bosun was swilling it to the

scuppers with a powerful hose-jet. Two more sailors painted a deckhouse, stroking the steel bulkheads like artists at work on oils. Trickles of sweat dripped from their faces and bodies. But the hammering went on, laying bare gaunt patches of rusted steel, sounding throughout the ship with anvil clangs. It assaulted the ears continuously; and clouds of dust grains floated about in a dusty iron-smelling harmattan.

Sometimes the vessel bounced gently for a few moments and the flying-bridge, which linked midships accommodation with the rooms astern, creaked with a high-pitched thrill. In a glass-calm sea the bounce would whip over steel masts, set the triatic stay and halyards trembling, and flutter the radio aerial like a washing-line in the wind.

So day followed day and down in the tanks the cargo of a million gallons, which is but part of a pipe-line between the East and Europe, floated through the seas. It was protected and nursed like rationed whisky. A careless match or cigarette could have blown the whole vessel sky-high.

EVENTUALLY the tanker came to cooler climes, then on to her port of discharge. To load and discharge often takes only a day, but leaves a residue of tar-like silt and hanging gases. So she departed for deep-sea again, a hundred miles from the coast. The weather was cool now, with thick, damp, rolling clouds, and for days she drifted freely, as tanks were cleaned. With jets of steam and the breeze flowing down through windsails, the gases were blown away. Then jackbooted and oilskinned seamen dug out the silt and heaved it over the side, where it became lost and absorbed by the ocean. It was a dirty job, but they could breathe again.

So the vessel finally returned to complete her voyage. The crew, more than a year away, had earned a long leave. Stretches at sea had been prolonged, stays in harbour very fleeting, and mostly they were tired as the vessel. But supplies have to be maintained, and after the wear and tear of weather had been scraped off, her engines rejuvenated, her new coat administered, the tanker would again take her place in the pipe-line, and sail to the oil ports of the world.



A Housemaster's Case-Book

VII.—Gordon Feather

EVERETT BARNES

So when folks are disposed to ill-treat you, young man, say 'Lord have mercy upon me!' and then tip them Long Melford, to which, as the saying goes, there is nothing comparable for shortness all the world over.

BORROW.

EVERY housemaster has to deal in his time with cases of bullying. The old-fashioned kind—the deliberate infliction of physical torture on the weak—may be said, happily, to be now more or less extinct in public-schools; there is not much roasting these days, in the Tom Brown manner, nor throwing of non-swimmers into deep water. But the word is so wide in its connotation that in some form or other bullying will inevitably crop up from time to time where a herd of young boys is gathered together.

I once had in my House, it is true, a boy who was beaten with stinging-nettles on his bare behind; but that was a matter easily dealt with—by the removal of the culprit to an institution better designed for dealing with such perversions. Most cases nowadays fall under the head of 'bully-ragging'—an ex-

aggerated and persistent teasing, which often involves hustling and pushing about, snatching of property, sitting on the prostrate form, and such small hostilities, which in time attain large dimensions for the victim. Ingenuity may make original use of local opportunities; a small broom cupboard, for example, in my House was found just large enough to include a human body slightly compressed. A few boys are natural bullies, who require special treatment; but apart from them there are others who, though individually humane enough, are influenced by the herd-spirit to persecute what is weak and unresisting.

In modern times, however, more often than not bullying derives from the disposition of the victim, so that the housemaster who is trying to secure that his little charges behave towards each other in a reasonably civilised manner will often find that trouble comes from boys who, for one reason or another, ask to be bullied.

These distressful children are of various kinds. First, there are those who combine an unlikeable personality with 'freshness'—

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

in the slang sense which Melbury used for years before it was reimported from America. They provoke others to persecute them in the interests of social order; and the persecution acquires an added relish because it is exercised on an object much disliked. In such cases there is little to be done except to wait for a dawning sense of tact and discretion to rescue the victim from his predicament. Physical cruelty as a rule figures little in the processes involved, which are of the bullying order; but the total effect may amount to mental cruelty and cause pretty serious unhappiness.

Another type of boy to invite bullying is the one with a quick temper who is easily baited. Unfailing sport may be expected from such a one; he gets angry at any kind of ragging, and the more angry he gets, the more delightedly he is ragged. His kind presents a difficult problem; they are often boys of character and not unpopular; but the temptation to annoy them is irresistible. As their reactions tend to be extremely violent, forceful restraint by superior numbers is required, and then anything may happen. They are difficult to protect, because they are at least partly responsible for their own troubles. It takes a lot to break their spirit, but none the less their lives may become a misery.

Lastly, there is the boy who by his total lack of spirit makes himself a communal victim. These are the most difficult of all to deal with, because they will do nothing whatever to help themselves. To this type belonged the boy Feather.

MY first meeting with Feather's mother filled me with misgiving. She was a widow, and Gordon Feather was her only son. It was immediately evident that she was the most doting of parents and that no son brought up by her would have much chance. Not only was the boy, by her account, sensitive and highly-strung, but he was so delicate that she could hardly enjoy a carefree moment. Added to this was the disadvantage that he had not previously been at a boarding-school. When she brought the boy for his first term, his appearance did nothing to remove my forebodings. With his flat and wide-eyed countenance and general flabbiness of physique, he confirmed my fears that he had been spoilt by his devoted mother, both

physically and morally, to a quite alarming degree. I saw large troubles looming ahead in Gordon Feather's first experience of boarding-school, with little assistance to be hoped for from Mrs Feather. 'You will write and tell me how he is getting on, won't you, Mr Barnes?' she implored me. 'I shall be terribly anxious about him.'

I promised to write, as I always did about new arrivals after a week or so, and Mrs Feather took her tearful departure.

New boys at Melbury always had an easy start. There were no trying ceremonies of initiation, and they were left for the first few weeks to find their feet undisturbed. During this period they were summed up by their companions, and if they gave satisfaction they afterwards fitted easily into the scheme of things.

Feather obviously did not settle down very happily, but as this was the first time he had ever been separated from his mother that was not surprising. He was excessively homesick, and showed it. Mrs Feather wrote to me at least once a week, and would have come down every Sunday if I had not firmly kept her away. The boy soon revealed that he had one consuming passion—railway administration. The mechanical aspect of trains and engines seemed to interest him little, but he would spend hours organising timetables and arranging tours of duty for engine-drivers, guards, and ticket-collectors. He considered Bradshaw a rather amateurish work, capable of much improvement.

Towards the middle of the term hints began to appear in my letters from Mrs Feather that Gordon was not being treated kindly by the other boys. I talked to Feather about it but could get nothing from him except tearful untruths to the effect that everything was quite all right. I urged him to come and tell me if he was not getting on well, and he said he would; but I thought he was much too frightened to do so.

Then I talked to Jameson, the senior boy in Day Room—that is, the place where boys who were too young to have studies spent their leisure. I asked him how Feather was getting on.

'Oh, all right, sir.'

'What do you think of him?'

Jameson thought for a moment. He was a large boy for his age, not very intelligent, but extremely honest. Then he said: 'He's a bit wet, isn't he, sir?'

A HOUSEMASTER'S CASE-BOOK

My own opinion exactly, but I could not tell Jameson so. 'You're not letting him be bullied, are you, Jameson?' I asked.

'Oh no, sir. He just gets ragged a bit—about his timetables.'

'How does he take it?'

'He's rather a kid, sir. He generally cries.'

I exhorted him to see that Feather was left alone, but I knew that with the best will he could not do much. He had little authority over other boys of about his own age, with no power of punishment behind him.

I then talked to Meade-Thompson, my House Captain. He used the same epithet for Feather—who would not?—but he had little chance of knowing what went on in Day Room. The most perfunctory 'cave' system would ensure that lawless activities were not disturbed. I could only urge him to keep his eyes open for any signs of trouble with Feather.

The term ended without any crisis, but the boy never looked any happier and my suspicions that he was being persecuted were not allayed. However, I could get nothing out of him, and Jameson's view was that he would get on quite well if he were not such a kid. He really knew an awful lot about trains, he said. I felt that Jameson was probably right, but Mrs Feather would not see it like that.

NEXT term the boy seemed as miserable as ever, though neither from him nor from other sources could I get any evidence of specific maltreatment. After a few weeks the mother wrote a really troubled letter. 'I am afraid Gordon is terribly unhappy,' she said. 'I cannot get him to tell me anything definite, but he says all the boys are horrid and he has no friends. I am so worried about him, because he is really not strong enough to stand any prolonged unhappiness. He is such a happy boy at home—he keeps himself amused all day long with his railway arrangements. He really has a most sunny nature and I know it cannot be his fault if he is unhappy at school. Do please, Mr Barnes, see if you can make the other boys be nicer to him.'

Once again I interviewed Feather himself and cross-examined Jameson and one or two other inhabitants of the Day Room who might be causing trouble, and dealt out warnings that I would hold them all re-

sponsible if Feather were being persecuted. But the trouble was elusive and intangible. I could find no hard evidence of bullying. The general impression conveyed was that the boy was laying himself open to scorn and derision by spending most of the day crying about nothing.

A week or so later Mrs Feather wired that she was coming down to Melbury and asked to see me in the afternoon. She turned up in deep distress, saying that Gordon had begged her to take him away. He was so miserable, he said, that he could not stand it any longer. Didn't I think that she had better take him home, at any rate till the end of the term?

I should have been considerably relieved to see him go, but that would have been an admission of defeat, which could not be accepted; besides, I knew what harm could be done to the school—and to my House—by the removal of a boy 'because he was so terribly bullied.' I told Mrs Feather that if only he would say clearly what was the trouble I should be able to deal with it. She agreed to my cross-examining Gordon in her presence, in the hope that she would give him confidence to tell me the truth.

The boy subsided into tears before I had well started. I assured him that everything could be put right if only he would tell us exactly what was wrong. To my general question, why was he so unhappy, he replied: 'They won't leave me alone.'

'How exactly do you mean? What do they do?'

'They nudge my arm when I'm writing . . . and they pretend to cry when they see me . . . and pull my chair away . . . and things like that.'

I could clearly see it all happening. Such trivial matters—and yet I knew how soul-destroying it could become to one who lay down under it.

'Who does this?' I asked. 'Is it one particular boy? You *must* tell me.'

'It's five or six of them. But none of the boys like me . . . they won't let me have any friends.'

'Have they done anything more than you said? That's just teasing, really.'

'They bush me sometimes when I'm going to the Labs.'

I knew what that meant. There was a cluster of evergreen shrubs, laurel, box, and the like, on one side of the approach to the Laboratories, and 'bushing' meant projecting

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

a boy into them—an ignominious and dirty-ing procedure, but not particularly painful. I got out a House list and read through the names of all the boys in Day Room, asking whether each one was a cause of trouble. Very reluctantly Feather answered 'Yes,' or 'Sometimes,' or 'A bit' to several of the names. Eventually I had seven culprits ticked off on the list.

When the boy had gone, I told Mrs Feather that now I could do something effective. She must on no account take Gordon away, but instead do all in her power to put a little ginger into him. A forlorn hope, I feared.

THE next day I talked to all the boys in Day Room and did my best to frighten them properly. I told them that they had made Feather so miserable that 'his people' wanted to take him away. But they were not going to do so; if Feather went on being miserable, he would not go away, but certain other boys (unnamed) would. Those boys had better, in their own interests, see that Feather ceased being miserable and became happy. I gave Meade-Thompson the names of the suspects—most of them decent enough boys really—so that he could intensify his watch on the situation; and told Feather that if any boy did anything definitely hostile to him he *must* come and tell me at once. I was fully aware that these were desperate remedies. One cannot regulate human relations by magisterial edict—or make a boy happy by getting him to 'sneak' on his persecutors. But these measures should at least tide over the immediate crisis.

Two uneventful days followed. On the third, in the break before lunch, Feather arrived precipitately in my study in about as demoralised a condition as anything I have ever seen. He was not only weeping freely, but his clothes were sopping wet and he was in a state of complete nervous collapse. It was some time before I could find out what had happened; but at last I disentangled his story from the incoherent bletherings which were the only form of utterance he could manage. A boy called Roberts had given him a message from one of the Monitors, whose fag Feather was, telling him to fill a basin with water—making sure that it was absolutely full—and take it down to the Monitor's study. Feather proceeded to carry out his instructions, and as he came out of the

bathroom with the basin, a boy named Barlow had come full tilt along the passage and sent him flying, with the effect that he was not only shaken to his foundations but also drenched with the water from the basin.

I calmed the boy down as much as I could, but my suggestion that the whole thing was probably an accident did not convince him at all. He was certain the assault was deliberately planned. I sent him away to change his clothes.

After lunch I began inquiries. The Monitor had sent no message for a basin of water. Roberts admitted that at the moment of the collision he had been outside the bathroom door, and—when pressed—that he had in fact given Barlow the signal which had enabled him to time his impact so nicely. Altogether a very ingenious piece of junior thuggery. I beat both boys, and made ominous prognostications about the future if this outrage should result in any further move to take Feather away.

But I knew that the problem could not be solved thus. Feather would certainly be immune from physical assault for some time, but he would be more than ever liable to a kind of withering treatment against which one could not legislate. Unless he could be induced to stand up for himself in some way, his position was hopeless.

MY thoughts went back many years to a time when I was a small boy at a day-school. At one period going home on winter evenings became a nightmare. I had to walk about a mile through suburban streets, with one stretch of a couple of hundred yards where no houses had yet been built. Two other small boys used to go the same way home, one of them a stocky little tough called Ellington, the other his admiring accomplice. A practice grew up of these two waiting for me in the dusk in that empty stretch of road and indulging in sportive games at my expense, which grew from day to day in unpleasantness. I never made any resistance of a violent kind, knowing that I was no match even for Ellington alone. I used to pretend that I did not mind, though in reality these playful bouts filled me with a daylong dread. Eventually it became the routine that I was got on to the ground and sat on by both boys—a posture which has always filled me with a morbid horror. j

A HOUSEMASTER'S CASE-BOOK

I said nothing about these tribulations when I got home, but my mother could not fail to see, from the state of my clothes and my nerves, what was going on. One evening, when I was wondering desperately how I could evade my tormentors, with unspeakable relief I saw my mother coming to meet me. I had not yet encountered the other two, and they, seeing my escort, came out of ambush and walked home sedately in front of us.

The next afternoon I was taking off my football-boots in the changing-room when Ellington came and sat down beside me. He also began to remove his boots and said without looking at me: 'Did the poor little chap have to get his mummy to protect him?'

I don't know why I did it—I had not lost my temper, nor was there any deliberate plan in my mind—it was a purely instinctive reaction—but I gave the boy such a welt with my open hand on the back of the head that he almost fell forwards off the form. He looked round at me in utter amazement. Then he got up and walked away to a different part of the room. I never from that moment suffered the slightest inconvenience from his attentions on my walks home, or at any other time.

Filled with a new purpose I sent for Feather again. I pointed out what a terrible setback to his whole career it would be if he were taken away from Melbury. I told him the time had come when he *must* stand up for himself. And I explained exactly how he was to do it. There was no doubt that Roberts or Barlow, or both of them, when they next saw Feather, would not indeed dare to touch him, but would make some scorching observation about the kind of boys who ran off and 'sneaked' to their housemasters. At that point, I said, Feather must very suddenly hit the speaker on the end of his nose with the utmost possible force. I selected this exact point of impact because I believed, from personal experience, that such a blow would combine surprise effect and pain to the fullest advantage.

Feather was in no way inspired by my proposal. 'I don't know anything about boxing,' he said.

'There's no need. Here, hit my hand with your fist as hard as you can.' And I held out my open palm in front of him. After a few feeble attempts he succeeded in giving it a blow which, if properly directed, would serve its turn.

'What happens if he hits me back, sir?' he asked anxiously, quick to perceive a possibility which always detracts from the pleasure of hitting people on the nose.

'I don't think he will,' I said. 'He will be too surprised. But if he does, go for him and roar as loud as you can. I'll have the Monitors ready to come and rescue you.'

Feather remained distinctly lukewarm about the whole conception, and displayed absolutely no lust for combat. However, I succeeded in making him promise that he would take the first opportunity of trying my prescription, and assured him that if he acted suddenly enough it could not fail. I advised him if possible to operate the scheme on Roberts, and not on Barlow. The former was a sleek, droopy-eyed boy, who I felt sure could be hit on the nose with impunity. Barlow, on the other hand, was all guts and mischief, and if he received the attack Feather might well have to roar to some purpose. I may say that this was the first and last time I ever instigated fighting in my House.

I warned Meade-Thompson to be on the alert for sounds of roaring, and also told Jameson, who had been very sensible about the whole affair, to keep a lookout in case the worm turned, and stop at once any rough-house that might result. Then I awaited developments.

ALL this happened on a Friday. I heard no more that day, and when Meade-Thompson came in before going to bed he had nothing to report. Next morning there was still no news and I began to fear that Feather's nerve, if he could ever be said to have had any, had failed him. Just before lunch I had a telephone-call from Mr Roberts, who I knew was coming down on Sunday to take his boy out. 'I only wanted to know,' he said, 'what William's been up to.'

'As far as I know, nothing out of the ordinary,' I replied.

'We had a postcard this morning telling us not to come down to-morrow, as he wasn't allowed to come out with us.'

'That's news to me. I gave him leave to go out three or four days ago.'

'I wonder what the boy's talking about. Anyhow, we'll come down as arranged. Would you mind telling him?'

'I will certainly,' I said. 'And I'll find out what he means.'

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

However, when I saw the boy there was no need to inquire. He had a black-eye and walked with a limp.

'Hullo, Roberts,' I said, 'have you been fighting?'

'No, sir,' he said shamefacedly, 'not exactly.'

'Not exactly? What does that mean? What's been happening to you?'

'A boy pushed me accidentally,' he said, 'and I fell over a chair—and hurt my knee.'

'And your eye? Did you bump it when you fell?'

'Yes, sir,' said Roberts, and added, to appease his conscience, 'sort of.'

'I see. Well, your people say they're coming down to-morrow in spite of your postcard. They'll be interested to hear exactly how it all happened.'

'Yes, sir,' said Roberts, and crept away.

I gradually discovered that the reason why I had heard nothing about this before was that Feather had now become a daredevil law-breaker, who had to be shielded from the eye of authority—that is, from the Monitors and myself. Not only Roberts, but also the Matron, who had tended his wounds, and Jameson were involved in the conspiracy of silence. It was from the last-named and Feather himself that I subsequently learned what had happened.

Soon after lunch the day before, Feather had encountered Roberts in the Day Room. The latter, as was to be expected, made a caustic remark about sneaks. Feather then

rose to the occasion and carried out my instructions to the letter—or almost so. His first blow, it is true, landed in Roberts's eye, and not on his nose as intended; but he found the sensation so pleasurable, and Roberts showed so little tendency to reprisals, that he quickly corrected his error, landing a right and left to the nose in rapid succession. Much to his disappointment—for he now found he really liked boxing—Roberts then fell over a chair, straining his knee in the process. Jameson was full of enthusiasm for a very dashing performance. 'I never thought he had it in him, sir,' he said. 'He always seemed such a cissy.'

On Sunday Mr and Mrs Roberts called in when they brought the boy back. Mr Roberts was very sensible about William's injuries. He knew you must accept the rough and tumble of school-life without complaint—that was what schools were for. 'But, you know, William's no fighter,' he said. 'He wouldn't tell us how it happened, naturally. But are you sure you haven't got a boy in the House who's a shade too ready with his fists?'

I said I would make suitable inquiries.

It would not be right to suggest that Gordon Feather turned into a *preux chevalier*, or was ever likely to; but he was never again molested that I heard of, and he became quite a popular figure in a small circle. He remained at Melbury four years more, during which he mostly devoted himself, undisturbed, to the serious business of train-schedules.

Lost Summer

*Shrill sea-gull voices like children crying,
Lonely and lost on the wild seashore,
Cold leaden sky and a pale sun dying,
Summer is over to come no more.*

*Summer the golden, with two hearts waking,
Calling winged Love through the dew-drenched dawn,
Long days, sun-filled, by the white waves breaking.
Now he has left me, and I am alone.*

*Winter has come, and the wild gulls crying,
Lost voices calling again and again,
Pierce my sad heart where young Love lies dying,
Leaving dead ashes for living pain.*

MARY M. GILMORE.

Trees That Fight Rail Fires

BASIL FULLER

TO fight fire with trees is an idea which will be new in most parts of the world. Yet this curious notion is being used with great success in lonely parts of Natal, in the Union of South Africa. Here is sugar-cane country, and sparks from railway-engines once caused devastation in many plantations. In many places gradients are steep and it is natural that locomotives should sometimes puff and spark. But the danger so caused is now being overcome by using an ingenious treatment which may be described most readily as the V anti-spark process.

It is most interesting to watch the work in progress at spots which have been carefully chosen as likely scenes of sudden fire. Perhaps the track mounts in a steady gradient. On either hand, canefields hem the steel. A high-flying spark falls on a dry patch and the harm is soon done, and a heavy account for damages reaches railway headquarters from the owner of the cane.

So one day a gang of workmen alights from a passing train. These men bring with them eucalyptus trees and small bushes, which are stacked beside the permanent way. Sometimes the plants are no more than seedlings growing in large boxes; sometimes they are as much as from 2 to 3 feet high. Soon planting begins, and in a few days a long stretch of line is flanked upon both sides with a novel defence of triple-banked greenery.

Parallel with the steel, and about 50 feet from it, eucalyptus trees are set at intervals of 9 feet. Then, 6 feet inside these outer lines, inner rows are planted. On each side of the track, the lines of trees are staggered, so that saplings in the outer row stand opposite gaps in the inner row. Finally, the labourers plant an innermost line, this time of bushes. The bushes are set 38 feet from the permanent way. As in the case of the trees, they stand 9 feet apart. They are of various species,

sometimes the African mamtungulu, sometimes guava. But an effort is made to use only fruit-bearing shrubs, so that railway repair-gangs may have a ready fruit supply. In order to introduce colour into the scheme, the pepper-bush is used occasionally.

THIS novel spark-trap now presents a curious spectacle to the interested observer. On either side of the track, and stretching away along it further than the eye can see, lie three parallel and equidistant rows of plants. As one takes up a position between the rails, one's eye follows the newly-set rows, three upon the right hand and three upon the left hand, as they march away into infinity. Allowing for coach overhang, the innermost rows lie about 12 yards from the carriage windows and the outmost rows some 4 yards more.

Eucalyptus trees grow very fast. Ten feet a year is normal, and sometimes they leap upwards even more rapidly. So, since early experiments in this unusual fire-prevention scheme began during the Second World War, to-day there are many places where trees are well over 80 feet high. In all such spots already thickly interlacing branches form serviceable barriers against flying sparks.

At this stage the V formation of the fire-trap first becomes noticeable. Developing the mental picture, you will see two banks of thickly intertwined foliage, one on either side of the line. Further, it is clear that each of these banks consists of three steps.

Outer row trees are to be allowed to attain their maximum growth, which varies from 80 to 100 feet according to the depth and fertility of the soil in which they are set. But the middle lines will be truncated at a height of about 50 feet, so that they may become bushy and their foliage thicken. Inside, and

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

yet lower, the bushes reach a maximum height of about 15 feet, and at the same time grow down to ground-level. Thus, when the scheme is complete, on either side of the track the three steps will measure respectively about 15, 50, and 80 to 100 feet in height. Then no high-flying spark will leap the obstacle offered by the close-set branches of the trees, while no track-side fire—started by red-hot cinders raked from an engine's ashpan—will pass the barrier formed by the trailing branches of the dense bushes.

THE plants used in this ingenious fire-fighting plan are grown at a lonely nursery named Inchanga, near the sun-drenched Valley of a Thousand Hills, where many Africans still live in tribal simplicity. Inchanga is reached by descending side-roads, rough and steep, then following a narrow bush-track, where branches whip the sides of one's car, until at last the traveller emerges in a drowsy trough in the hills.

The imagination is gripped by this fascinating spot. A few huts stand beneath trees growing close beside a little country railway platform. Near by is a house, the home of the horticulturist in charge. On the platform lie many boxes of seedling trees waiting for transportation up-country. Standing still to listen to the enveloping hush, one feels that the silence is so complete that it should be possible to hear the very plants busily thrusting upwards through the soil. Nor is this fantasy entirely ridiculous, for the place is intensely active. An average of 30,000 trees and 15,000 flowering plants are despatched each month from the little platform.

The District Horticulturist takes pride in showing visitors through his gardens, and in explaining the principles of the fire-fighting

scheme. Production is studied in minute detail. One interesting fact will serve to illustrate this point. Examining examples amongst the large number of growing boxes, which, usually, are found ranged at the back of the platform, visitors will notice that sand has been scattered over the soil. When the reason for this is asked, it will be explained that, unless some protection is given, the sun cracks the soil and scorches the seed, especially the dust-like seed of the eucalyptus tree, but coarse surface sand protects soil and seed from the direct rays of the sun, preserves moisture, and yet is loose enough to admit the air.

When the tiny trees stand about an inch above the level of the sand they are pricked out in shallow wooden trays. Each tray holds thirty-five seedlings. Later, as the seedlings grow to saplings, each is set in a tin of its own.

The District Horticulturist remarked that about 3500 plants—trees and bushes—are used in treating one mile of railway-track against the danger of flying fire. Thus a rough calculation reveals that over 740,000 plants will have been grown at Inchanga for this purpose alone by the time the V anti-spark process is complete. No allowance has been made in this figure for replacements necessitated by the many losses which must inevitably occur in any plan of this kind developed on so large a scale.

The visitor leaves Inchanga with regret. As I topped a near-by ridge, shadows from the western hills began to throw black patches across the burgeoning gardens. A train puffed slowly through the valley, drew up at the little platform. Immediately the staff grew busy loading fresh trees and bushes for use in the most ingenious scheme so far evolved in the fight against the railside menace of the flying spark.

Oh Present Time

*Oh present time, this moment mine
In which alone my happiness is held.
Let early years be coloured with pale light,
Let fade the cares and joys from memory's sight.*

*The future is not worthy of a fret,
It shapes itself on how the present's set—
That crown of past, that door to future years.
Then, of all three, give present time the cheers.*

AILSA CAMBRIDGE.

Twice-Told Tales

XLIX.—*The Island Julia*

[From *Chambers's Journal* of January 1855]

ONE fine morning the Island Julia sprang from the bottom of the sea. It was two leagues in circumference. It had scarcely sprung from the waves when an English man-of-war passed. The captain, astonished to see an island situated where his chart did not even point out a rock, had his vessel brought to, got into his boat, and landed. He found that the island had mountains, valleys, and a spring of boiling water. He sent for eggs and tea, and breakfasted near the fountain; then, after his breakfast, he took an English flag, planted it on top of the highest mountain, and pronounced the sacramental words: 'I take possession of this land in the name of His Britannic Majesty.' Then he returned to his vessel, made sail, and went on his course to England, announcing that he had discovered an unknown island in the Mediterranean, which he had named Julia, in honour of the month of July, the date of its discovery, and that he had taken possession of it in the name of England.

After the English vessel, a Neapolitan one passed. At the sight of this unknown island, the captain took his glass and by its aid found that the isle had a mountain, and that at the top of this mountain the English flag was planted. He at once called for volunteers to go on a voyage of discovery. Two Sicilians offered themselves, got into a boat, and departed. A quarter of an hour afterwards, they returned with the English flag. The Neapolitan captain then declared that he took possession in the name of the king of the Two Sicilies, and named the isle St Ferdinand in honour of his gracious sovereign. Then he returned to Naples, prayed for an audience of the king, told him that he had discovered an island ten leagues in circumference. He added, in an off-hand manner, that an English line-of-battle ship wished to dispute possession of the island with him, and that he had sunk

the said line-of-battle ship, and brought her flag in proof of his assertion. The next day it was announced that the Admiral Bonnacorri, Duke of St Ferdinand, had discovered in the Mediterranean an island fifteen leagues in circumference, and that the king had offered the hand of his daughter to the admiral.

The same day the English ambassador went to the Neapolitan minister of marine to demand explanations of the rumours, affecting the honour of the British nation, which had been spread about an English ship Admiral Bonnacorri said that he had sunk. The minister of marine answered that he had heard some vague rumours of something of the sort, but that he did not know whether the English or the Neapolitan vessel had been sunk. Far from being satisfied by this explanation, the ambassador asserted that his nation was insulted by the simple supposition that an English line-of-battle ship could be sunk by any other vessel whatever, and demanded his passports. The minister referred the matter to the king, who ordered the signature of all the passports that the ambassador demanded, and on his part sent to his minister in London to leave the capital of Great Britain instantly.

Nevertheless, the English government pursued the taking possession of the Island Julia. An old naval lieutenant, who had lost a leg at Aboukir, and who had ever since been soliciting for some recompense from the Lords of the Admiralty, was appointed governor. The worthy sailor went on board the frigate *Dart*, doubled Ushant, crossed the Bay of Biscay, passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, entered the Mediterranean, coasted the shores of Africa, came off Pantellaria, looked about him, and saw no more of the Island Julia there than on his own hand. The Island had disappeared the day before, and I have never heard say that anyone has ever heard it mentioned since.



In Broad Daylight

EBROCK VALDROSS

THE night he told me this story Peter Maxwell and I were parked at a tiny resthouse deep in the Western Ashanti forest. I remember that I had made some comment about the night being unusually dark, and our servants being scared of ghosts, and that I was surprised when Peter said: 'It's not so unreasonable either. Up here in the forest a lot of things happen that can't easily be explained away—and not only on dark nights.'

Such a remark as that came strangely from Peter, who was a hardheaded lowlander; so I put the question that launched him on this story, a story that he can no longer tell, for Peter lies somewhere in a Burma swamp, where he and his Chindit patrol were at long last trapped by the Japs.

WHEN we first planned the Palosu cocoa-farming scheme we should have got nowhere at all had it not been for Headchief Yaw Amankwa. George Vavasour, who was District Commissioner at Bondikese, was the originator of the development scheme, and was a grand chap; his Assistant Commissioner, at Palosu Sub-Station, was Hugh Calvert—about the best young political

officer I ever met; and I was a keen enough young Assistant Superintendent of Agriculture in those days; but the three of us would never have got the cocoa-planting started if old Yaw Amankwa hadn't worked so loyally with us.

Just at first there wasn't another native in all Palosu State that had even the slightest interest in the development scheme. Think of the money our Palosu farmers have made out of cocoa since then! The villagers were living just as their fathers and grandfathers had lived, and they were firmly against changes of any kind: they existed in reasonable comfort without money, had no understanding of export crops, and did not want to clear forest and plant cocoa. Headchief Yaw Amankwa, like all of the older men of his tribe, was illiterate; but he was a highly intelligent old autocrat, and he had the interests of his people much at heart. I've never been certain that even he fully understood what would result from the development scheme, but I know that he never doubted George Vavasour's promises that its success would eventually bring great benefits to his people. We three Europeans supplied the ideas and the cocoa seedlings, but it was the Headchief's driving-force that got thous-

ands of acres of forest felled, cleared, and planted, that got the pioneer roads built by communal labour, and that forced several hundred unwilling villagers to become small-holders.

We had quite a few setbacks and disappointments during those first few years—as well as some great successes—and always the four of us worked as a band of brothers. Those were grand years, and I think that old Yaw Amankwa enjoyed them as much as we whitemen did. The work might have gone on like that, right up to the end, had not George Vavasour been transferred, on promotion, to East Africa. Our first crop of cocoa was coming on well when Vavasour left, and to him, as to us, it looked as though success was well in view.

YOUNG Calvert ran Bondikese District for a few weeks, and then that damned fool Littlewick-Harley was sent up there. Trouble started at once, of course. Even before he had completed taking over from Calvert, Littlewick-Harley announced that he was 'seriously dismayed by the undue familiarity' between Calvert and the Headchief of the Palosus. A few days later he started on me with: 'I disapprove of your far too close association with the Headchief, who, in my considered opinion, is a drunken illiterate tyrant, and has for too long been allowed, by Major Vavasour, to bully and misgovern his unfortunate subjects.'

Well, I'm not a redhead for nothing, so I spoke out a bit in reply: but Littlewick-Harley only looked damned superior, and told me he was considering reporting unfavourably to the Director of Agriculture upon my behaviour. He left me alone though, after that, and seems to have tackled Yaw Amankwa himself, for it was soon obvious that they were barely on speaking terms.

Within a few weeks Calvert and I noticed a change in Yaw Amankwa. He'd always been a good steady drinker, but had hitherto carried his drink like a gentleman: now he was often morose and tetchy in his cups. I blamed his bad-temper on the rot-gut stuff he was drinking: until lately he had drunk only honest Scotch whisky, squareface gin, or good cask-rum, but now it was some filthy French liquor that smugglers were bringing across from the Ivory Coast. It was horribly crude stuff, with an overpowering reek of

commercial alcohol and aniseed, and the old man was knocking back several pints of it each day. We both tried to give him good advice, but he only hooted with laughter at us, and didn't slow up in the slightest degree.

What with Littlewick-Harley being a prize prig at all times, and Headchief Yaw Amankwa being in an almost permanent state of alcoholic indignation, life was not all that it had been before George Vavasour left Bondikese. Still, our first crop, though a light one, was an eye-opener to the small-holders: prices were unexpectedly high that year, and we sold at the very top of the market. The natives found themselves with such sums of money as had, up to then, been beyond their wildest dreams: but, of course, they did not see, what became very clear to Hugh Calvert and me, that our transport costs between farms and railhead were terribly high, and that had cocoa prices been low that season there would have been hardly any profit in the crop.

We found it easy enough to explain to Yaw Amankwa, and to show him that by making a direct road from Palosu to Obomokrom siding we should save almost a hundred miles of road transport and a good few miles of railway pull. He saw at once that our present route, from the farms to Bondikese over our new pioneer roads, and from Bondikese to Kumasi by the narrow ill-graded old district road that meandered all over the hills of Western Ashanti, was uneconomical. He was as keen as we were to get the new road made, and he proposed to get work started on it within the next few weeks.

WE had all reckoned without our District Commissioner! As soon as the project was brought to his notice, Littlewick-Harley gave us a lengthy diatribe. He saw little necessity for the new road, even were it to be built by paid labour; and he was not prepared to countenance its being built by unpaid labour. He objected on principle to communal labour, which was, he said, 'oppressive, archaic, and undemocratic.'

I really enjoyed that meeting in L.-H.'s office. Dear old Yaw Amankwa was rock-sober, for once, and behaved like the fine old-fashioned tribal Chief that he was. His manners were perfect, but he was totally uncompromising. He pointed out to Littlewick-Harley that the very men who built the

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

road would be those that would profit most by it; and that, from time before tribal memory, the forest paths of Palosu State had been made and maintained by unpaid communal labour. It was, he said, not a matter for the decision of the District Commissioner: he had never understood that a British political officer had any authority whatever in respect of communal labour in a native state. He didn't tell Littlewick-Harley, in so many words, that he was an ill-informed political officer, and that he knew exactly nothing of native custom or of Palosu State, but he made it perfectly clear that in fact that was what he thought. Littlewick-Harley waffled and argy-bargied quite a lot, but at last was forced to agree that it 'might' be worth while to make the road, and that there 'seemed to be' no other way to do so than by using communal labour.

What caused a great deal of trouble for us all was that Littlewick-Harley, in friendly chats with his clerks, had opened his silly mouth pretty wide about the new road being unnecessary, and about communal labour being outdated and oppressive. The clerks had spread the District Commissioner's views throughout Bondikese, and men who had never before considered opposing their Headchief's orders were encouraged to work up an agitation against the new road scheme. A handful of 'literate' in Bondikese even formed themselves into a 'Protest Committee' and registered their protest to Littlewick-Harley. Still, although the villagers had no understanding of the necessity for the road, and heartily disliked the prospect of having to make it, there would have been no serious opposition if yet another factor had not at that point come into the matter. That factor was Owusu Amankwa, the Headchief's nephew.

OWUSU was Yaw Amankwa's sole male relative on the matrilineal side of the chiefly family, and so was the heir to the Palosu chieftainship. He and his uncle had been on the very worst of terms for several years, and Owusu had been living in voluntary exile at Kumasi, where he had been openly saying that his life would be in danger anywhere in Palosu State as long as his uncle was Headchief. Owusu was an undersized weakling, shortsighted, and with an ugly falsetto voice, strangely unlike a typical royal of the

Amankwa dynasty; but he spoke and wrote English well, and he was a fluent frothy orator both in his own language and in English. He now moved back into his mother's village, a few miles from Bondikese, and within a few days rallied round him the 'Protest Committee' members, and a small following of disgruntled villagers. In his frequent public speeches 'Prince Owusu,' as he called himself, never failed to belard 'our enlightened District Commissioner' with spadefuls of flattery. Littlewick-Harley loved it all immensely, and thought Owusu quite wonderful.

Just at first Owusu had only a small following, but gradually his propaganda caught quite a lot of decent villagers as well as most of the bone-lazy ones in the state. Even then, nothing might have resulted from Owusu's anti-road agitation had not Littlewick-Harley got the idiotic idea of convening what he called 'a tribal general meeting to discuss in open forum the matter of a proposed road to Obomokrom.' I could believe almost anything about Littlewick-Harley, but I hardly believed *that* when I first heard it!

Old Yaw Amankwa's reaction to the suggestion was magnificent. He got me to go with him to see Littlewick-Harley, and I enjoyed hearing him say: 'For over twenty years I have ruled my state and my people without assistance from the District Commissioner. Vavasour, who is of the chiefly caste himself, and the young whiteman Calvert, have always known it; but now you, who as yet show no understanding of this country, propose to turn my state policy into a matter for public discussion. You will yet learn that I am Headchief here, and that I have full power to ensure the obedience of my people.'

Angry as Yaw Amankwa was, I could sense that he was not worried about the outcome of the meeting. So confident did he appear to be that I found myself wondering what master-card it could be that he would produce from up his sleeve: it was obvious that he had one there.

OF COURSE I was there that day when Littlewick-Harley's great meeting was held under the palaver-tree in front of his office at Bondikese. It was the very biggest gathering of Palosus that I ever saw; Headchief Yaw Amankwa had seen to it that

IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

every family of his subjects was represented. Littlewick-Harley opened the meeting with a long, over-detailed discussion of the pros and cons of the scheme for the Obomokrom road. Then, after stating without much conviction that personally he thought the road would be likely to prove useful at some future date, he said: 'It would probably be worth your while to *volunteer* to build the road by communal labour.'

Every dark face in the big crowd had an expression of shocked incredulity at the District Commissioner's suggestion. Voluntary communal labour was a thing unheard of in their country: so from every side there were interjections of surprise. Littlewick-Harley must have been conscious that he was suddenly out of touch with his audience for with that he ended. Before sitting down, he said: 'I now call upon Prince Owusu Amankwa to state the views of those of you who are definitely unwilling to give your unpaid services towards the making of the proposed new road.'

Owusu gave us a selection of well-worn political clichés. Amongst others, 'the voice of the people,' 'the liberty of the subject,' 'the desirability—nay, my friends, the very necessity—for a ruler to consult the youthful educated intelligentsia of his tribe, rather than relying on his power as an autocrat,' all got lugged in by their ears. Every word of the speech was directed towards Littlewick-Harley, and very little of it can have meant anything to the rank and file of the crowd. When he ended up by saying: 'No Palosu would ever volunteer to do communal labour,' I found myself saying: 'No Briton would ever volunteer to pay income tax, but we have to pay it all the same!'

When the wordy ass at last sat down, old Yaw Amankwa started speaking at once. In a loud harsh voice of command, and without even rising to his feet, he shouted: 'Hear me well, you men of Palosu. You will make that road as I order you to, for now I swear the Great Oath of the Stool of Palosu on every man of you.' There was a moment of shocked silence, during which the Headchief rose to his feet and lowered his silken covercloth from his shoulders and knotted it below his armpits. Then, in a strangely subdued voice, he intoned about a dozen words that meant nothing to me, but certainly meant a great deal to his people. As he finished speaking those words, the great crowd started

hastily to disperse. They looked badly scared, and in a hurry to get away.

I heard Littlewick-Harley ask his interpreter: 'What were those last few words?' and, before the interpreter could speak, I also heard Yaw Amankwa say: 'Those words are without meaning to you others, but to us Palosus they have a meaning. The road will now be made!'

Littlewick-Harley looked even more like a perplexed sheep than usual as the crowd melted away in that unnatural haste and silence and left only us, and the Headchief and his personal entourage, under the palaver-tree. A moment later, having adjusted his covercloth over his shoulders, Yaw Amankwa spoke his formal phrases of farewell to us and moved away—a very picture of affronted dignity.

When, next morning, he came to my office to check up with me on the alignment of the first few miles of the road, Yaw Amankwa was full of smiles again. Without my asking him about it, he explained to me that the Great Oath of the Stool of Palosu was one that could be used only by the Headchief regnant, and that its use in conjunction with an order enforced complete and immediate obedience upon all Palosus. Once it had been sworn by the Headchief, only his deposition, or his death, could release his subjects from the duty put upon them. I suppose that I looked a bit thoughtful when he said that, for the old man gave a great guffaw of hearty amusement, and said: 'Do you think that any of those weaklings that follow my nephew Owusu would have the courage to attack me? It would be their only way, for there are only a few of them, and all the rest of my tribe are good loyal men. Who would ever depose me, to make Owusu Headchief of Palosu?'

WITHIN twenty-four hours, work was started on the new road. At first everybody worked well and cheerfully. The roadhead had advanced over twenty miles before progress slowed up somewhat, and labourers started to play truant. The news of that slowing up brought Yaw Amankwa himself on to the scene. Contrary to all usual native ideas of chiefly procedure, he moved up to the labour camp at roadhead and constituted himself overseer of the construction. That got the work moving at full

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

speed again, for he made himself the most efficient overseer I've ever seen on such a job. He knew just what he wanted done, and he could make his workers do it.

I was often up at roadhead with him, and we both thought that we should have the road open all the way to Obomokrom in time to carry the next season's cocoa crop. Fond of him as I was, I soon found out that being in his company out on the roadwork had its small drawbacks, for the reek of that filthy French liquor he drank was sickeningly strong, and he was always accompanied by a drummer who kept up a non-stop din on an unpleasant tinny little drum that made a singularly earshattering racket.

Then, when all was going well, came the disaster. Yaw Amankwa had been down to Bondikese to deal with some of his state affairs, and after three days' stay there was returning to roadhead, when he was assassinated. At a lonely spot, about halfway down the road, he and the five followers who were with him were attacked by eight men who ambushed them, and shot them at a range of only a few yards. Headchief Yaw Amankwa, his linguist, and his drummer were killed instantly; and two state elders and a counsellor were so badly wounded that they died within a few hours. Before dying, these men were able to say that the assassins were wearing only red loincloths, had their faces whitened as a disguise, and all had carried flint-lock guns.

Hugh Calvert had his few police and several parties of armed villagers out in the forest for several days, searching for the murderers: but that bit of forest is a perfect maze of smugglers' paths and hideouts, and the Ivory Coast frontier is only a few miles distant. Whoever the murderers were, they got clean away. The generally accepted theory was that they came from the Ivory Coast, and had fallen out with the Headchief about some illicit transaction in smuggled liquor; but that, of course, was pure guesswork. Calvert and I had our own ideas about the matter; but Owusu Amankwa was away at Kumasi for days before the murder occurred, and every other known malcontent in Palosu had a watertight alibi. Whatever we thought about it, there was nothing that we could prove.

Autocratic as old Yaw Amankwa had been, he was certainly greatly loved by his subjects. They gave him a most imposing

'funeral custom,' and I've never met a Palosu that didn't express affection and admiration for him, and hatred for his murderers. Yet, genuinely grieved as the Palosus were at his death, they stopped all work on the new road from the moment they knew of it, for their Headchief's decease had released them from the Great Oath that he had sworn on them. Calvert and I, and even Littlewick-Harley, tried to persuade them to get the road finished, but nothing we said caused a single labourer to return to roadhead. We started to think that the road must stand derelict and unfinished until a series of very hungry cocoa-seasons proved to the cocoa-farmers that their transport costs were taking the profits out of their business.

EARLY after the protracted funeral custom was terminated, Owusu Amankwa was enstooled as Headchief of Palosu State. Nobody except Littlewick-Harley was particularly enthusiastic about him at first. Headchief Owusu Amankwa had no great general popularity such as his uncle had possessed: but gradually it seemed to dawn on the Palosus that rule by King Log made a pleasant change after many years of rule by King Stork. I, who disliked Owusu intensely, was surprised to find him quite reasonably willing to assist the development of the cocoa-farming industry in his state: on the whole, he was even helpful. But he was quite firm in his attitude about the Obomokrom road, which he didn't consider necessary. He just dug his toes in. If we whitemen wanted the road made, we should get the Public Works Department to build it, and the Government to pay for it: he and his people would not lift a hand towards making it.

Then, after he had been Headchief for over four months, came his astonishing change of mind. Hugh Calvert and I were together in Calvert's office one morning, working on a scheme for a co-operative selling agency for our Palosu farmers, when Headchief Owusu Amankwa crashed in 'to see you on an urgent matter,' and then, without preamble or explanation of any kind, said: 'I shall complete the new road and get it open for lorry traffic before the cocoa-season starts.'

Owusu was in a shockingly nervous state that morning. I've never seen any other Palosu in quite such a panic as he appeared

to be in. When Calvert expressed his pleasure at the news, and asked Owusu why he had suddenly changed his mind, there was hysteria in the Headchief's voice and manner as he yelled out: 'I must make the road: I have got to do it.'

All the time he was talking with Calvert I was wondering what had scared him. He looked so devil-driven that I started to feel sorry for him; yet he had kept his head sufficiently to have made reasonable arrangements about the restart of the road. He had already sent messengers to assemble the labour-gangs from the villages, and he himself was going up to roadhead for the first few weeks. He left messages for Littlewick-Harley, who was on local leave at Accra at that time, and took his departure from Calvert's office looking the unhappiest Headchief that I ever saw.

WITHIN three days, work on the road was restarted. I gave it a chance to get well under way before I ran up to roadhead to have a look-see, so it was about a fortnight before I left on the trip. The journey made slow and watchful driving, even with my old 'Trojan,' that could climb through or over almost anything that called itself a road, but a great deal of work had already been done. All along the earlier-made sections of the road the overgrowth of weeds and bushes had been cut down, weed-blocked culverts had been cleared, and many washouts had been filled and levelled.

It was not until I was a long way down the road that I got hung up by a huge cottonwood tree that a tornado that morning had spilt right across the road. Luckily it was within half-a-mile of the biggest of the roadside villages, so I stayed that night at the village resthouse. Of course, in my job, I often stayed for weeks on end in village resthouses, so I knew what to expect in the way of discomforts. It came to me as a great surprise, therefore, when, instead of the pandemonium of drumming, singing, loudly-shouted conversations, and great gusts of laughter that is usual in a village of that size, there was complete silence from nightfall until just before dawn. When, after my evening meal, I asked old Sam, my Krooboy cook who was with me: 'Wassa matter this people they no flog drum and holler-holler?' he, who knew the country as well as I did, said: 'Master,

me, too, I no sabe this thing, but I think this country people catch fear bad. They no laugh, they no play, but all man work hard too much.'

Soon after daybreak next morning a gang of sawyers and axemen cleared enough of the cottonwood tree to enable me to drive the old 'Trojan' through a narrow gap, so it was still very early when I restarted my journey. Already small gangs of labourers were working on various jobs every few hundred yards along the road. That, again, was a surprise to me, for Palosus, like most forest-dwellers, are not usually early starters on a day's work, and all of these gangs were working fast and well. That held good for the next few miles of the road, and although there was hard work going on the men were everywhere working in a most unusual silence.

The road-surface was soft and muddy along all of the valley sections, and I could only drive very slowly; but by about nine o'clock I was within a couple of miles of roadhead. By then the sun was well up in the sky, and the day was promising to be a very hot one. I pulled up in a patch of shade where the road crested a low ridge of hills and told Sam to make my usual roadside breakfast.

From where I had stopped I could command about half-a-mile of the road in both directions, and could see several small road-gangs at work at different points. As I started to eat my breakfast I noticed that after three hours' strenuous effort the early-morning energy of the workers was slewing up a lot. All along the road, within my view, groups were sitting down and gossiping, here and there men were sprawled flat on the road, warming themselves in the morning sunshine, and the few men that were still working were showing no kind of hurry.

Then I saw Headchief Owusu Amankwa, under his state umbrella, followed by half-a-dozen of his entourage, come into sight from the direction of roadhead. As Owusu came along the road, each group of labourers stood up and greeted their Headchief respectfully as he approached them, but all resumed their peaceful attitudes of repose as soon as he was a few paces past them. When he reached me, he stopped to speak with me for a few minutes. He welcomed me on the road, and told me that the work was going forward well, and the labourers working hard. What interested me was that

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

he had a strange air of nervous tension, and that he was repeatedly glancing backwards along the road while he was talking with me. When I pointed out to him that of several score of men in sight only a dozen or less were working at that moment, he answered, without showing the least irritation: 'I do my part here. The road will be made in time.' With that he broke off the conversation and passed on down the road.

I WAS just finishing my breakfast, when, from up the road ahead of me, there came the sound of drumming: and as the sound reached me I saw all of the road-gangs restart work with an almost exaggerated energy. As the sound of the drumming grew louder, I realised that I knew the tones of that drum: it was certainly the same drum that had always been with Headchief Yaw Amankwa when he was out on the road construction—the drum that had been with him that day when he, the drummer, and the other four of his followers had been murdered a few miles back along the road. The sound of that drum came nearer, until it and the drum-beater should have been well within sight, but still there was no sign of them on the road.

Then I saw the most distant group of roadworkers stop work and turn towards the middle of the road. Each man uncovered his shoulders, and a moment later made the deep obeisance that a Palosu makes only to his Headchief. It was to nobody visible that they made that obeisance, and immediately afterwards they all resumed work. Each group, in turn, did exactly the same, and while I stared in amazement I realised that the sound of the drumming was already approaching the spot where Sam and I were standing by the side of the car. As that horrible racket of drumming moved up the hill, I saw grey terror on old Sam's face, and felt myself trembling heavily. Remember, it was between nine and ten o'clock in the morning, on a fine sunny day, out on an open road, and with anything up to a hundred people in sight—and the invisible drummer was within a few yards of us.

Little whirlwinds were spinning sand-devils across the dusty road, butterflies were hovering in a shimmering blue cloud above a damp spot where somebody had spilt palm-wine on the road close to where we were standing; and the ear-splitting noise of the invisible drumming passed along the road just in front of us, at a distance of only a few feet. During a few seconds, while the butterfly hover dispersed from above the spilt palm-wine, I could smell strongly the sickening reek of that French liquor that old Yaw Amankwa used to drink. Then the noise went on past me, and I saw Owusu Amankwa and his party coming back towards roadhead. In broad daylight I saw Owusu, who as Headchief in his own state has no superior in rank, uncover both of his shoulders and make a particularly deep obeisance as the ghostly drumming reached him and passed him by.

WELL, after that, Owusu and I got to know each other a lot better than before; and he didn't turn out such a bad chap after all. It may be that he had some part in his uncle's murder, but, if so, he certainly paid for it: there wasn't a Palosu in the whole state that didn't know that his present Headchief was only the unwilling but obedient mouthpiece of the beloved Headchief who had been killed.

Yes. We got the road through to Obomokrom all right, and our next cocoa-season was a magnificently successful one. Palosu has never looked back after that boom year that paid for our concrete culverts and for our co-operative sheds at Obomokrom siding. Everything worked out almost exactly as dear old George Vavasour had planned it in the days when Palosu was a backward state. After our third successful cocoa-season, I was one of many European guests present at a meeting at which the Colonial Secretary complimented Littlewick-Harley on the complete success of his efforts in developing the cocoa-farming industry in Palosu State, and awarded the King's Medal for African Chiefs to Owusu Amankwa, Headchief of Palosu, for his part in it.

That, too, was in broad daylight!

The Chairt

*There's a chairt on the wa'
Wi' mountains o' broon,
Wi' blue fer the lochans,
A dot fer the toon,
There's green fer the laigh-lan's,
An' hens' feet fer rails,
Wi' roads rinnin' a' weys
Like auld rattans' tails;
There's clachan an' city,
But forbye ilka mark,
Auld Scotia lies flat
As a weel-pressit sark.*

*Yet shepherds stravaig
On the hills a' their lane,
An' the lochs are camsteerie
Wi' boats o' MacBrayne,
In ilka howe glen,
On machar an' moor,
Are fowk crackin' crouse,
An' loons loup i' the stour.*

*A' the airts the roads rin
They are scartit wi' wheels,
Wi' buses owerfu'
Wi' owerfu' chieles,
An' i' mirk o' the slums
Or i' muckle birk hames
There's rowth o' fowk rins
Wi' mair fowk i' their wames.*

*As an emmet-pile stirrit
Wi' graun' parritch-spirtle,
The yin ower the tither
They clabber an' hurtle,
A' fankled wi' ettercap's
Gooley intrusion—
Some ca' it just 'siller',
Some 'sin' or 'illusion'.*

*Oh, whaur is the chiel
Wi' sae muckle a hairt
As tae see a' that pother
Set doon on that chairt,
Tae sing a' its sangs,
Tae tryst ilka cry,
Tae ken a' its waes—
An' tae lo'e it forbye?*

WENDY WOOD.



Mrs Briggs Takes a Lodger

R. H. FERRY

THE village said she had the bite of an adder and a tongue as sharp-edged as a blade of winter grass. The widow, Nancy Briggs, lived alone in Far Hill Cottage. Old 'Peggy' Briggs had been a smallholder with a few fields and an orchard where he ran a small head of livestock—a cow, a sow, three breeding geese, and a few laying hens. When the Topham Estate, on which the cottage stood, had been broken up, the holding had come into the market, and to the surprise of everyone Briggs's widow had produced the cash to buy the property. But Nancy Briggs was an unpredictable character.

For a time the widow took in a couple of lodgers—daymen farmhands that worked at the Croft Farm, for labourers' cottages were scarce. But no one could stand Nancy's vituperative tongue for long, and soon she was living alone, except for her terrier tike and two cats. Later she sold off most of the holding, just keeping a paddock for her hens and the orchard of cider fruit at the back.

She was a thin angular little woman of sixty, seemingly all acid, elbows, and chin, and to those who passed by the cottage she became a familiar but unapproachable figure as she went about her daily chores.

She took in washing from the Vicarage to

add to her widow's pension, but soon she fell out with the Vicar's wife and from then on she became more of a recluse than ever, scarcely speaking to a soul except when she descended upon the village.

The more charitably-minded in the village of Stanton, three miles away in the valley, dubbed Nancy 'a little strange', but those who had crossed swords and bandied words with her said she was 'clean crazy' and touched their foreheads whenever they mentioned her.

There were few tradesmen who had not felt the lash of her tongue, and not many others in the village had escaped her pointed remarks about the present way of living and her self-opinionated comparisons with bygone and better-conducted days. If the village looked on her as 'not quite quite,' Nancy had decided ideas about the village-folk. She had one stock phrase which ended almost any argument with her distant neighbours. 'I don't know what things be coming to, I'm sure,' she would mutter with a sharp nod of her pert little head and chin, poised on a thin but proud neck.

FEW people ever visited Far Hill Cottage, for the reception of visitors was always

MRS BRIGGS TAKES A LODGER

frigid, if not openly rude. Yet, lacking in human friendship, Nancy had a great love of animals. The mongrel terrier, Tim, always guarded the cottage with discordant yapping if anyone approached the wicket-gate, and snarled at the occasional gipsy bold enough to enter the yard at the back. And the two cats sat like porcelain figures on either side of the grate that Nancy burnished to a mirror shine. As she busied herself here and there, she talked to the cats and placed an almost continuous supply of milk before them. But each time the saucer was filled she would say in an admonishing way: 'I don't know what things be coming to, I'm sure.' The cats took little notice, lapping up the milk with indifference and a take-it-for-granted ingratitude.

The biggest bee in Nancy's bonnet was the matter of fox-hunting, and when the young kennel-whip called on her at the Master's orders, requesting her to take down the barbed-wire round her orchard before the season opened or to post warning boards, she soon had him in full cry down the garden-path, waving her late husband's wooden leg at him, and upbraiding him for being a cruel young man who ought not to be allowed out without his mother.

Parson Drew, also a hunting-man, went to the cottage one day to see if he could persuade Nancy to go to church and be a little more sociable. As soon as he broached the subject in the cottage porch, for he had not been asked in, Nancy expressed her views forcibly. 'You be a fine one, Parson Drew,' she hissed, 'to come here asking me to church, when you stand in the pulpit a' Sundays and stand up in stirrups for the rest o' the week galloping round the countryside like a mad thing.'

But the parson was not one to be put off his parochial duties easily, and he knew Nancy from the time she had come to the Vicarage with her pram to collect and deliver the smalls. 'What would you say, Mrs Briggs, if a fox came in the night and took all your hens?' he asked in an amiable way. 'I suppose you would claim compensation from the Hunt?'

Mrs Briggs stared at him with her lips tightly closed in a thin straight line. Then she shouted: 'You know as well as I do, parson, that I'm a very independent woman. I've never asked charity of no one and I'm never likely to start. I don't want the Master's money, let him blow his horn as

long as he's a mind. And I don't ask for parish relief either—the same as some widows I know of.'

'I'm glad to hear it, Mrs Briggs,' the parson broke in on the flow of the widow's tirade.

But Nancy was not to be put off her stride. 'And those that lose their hens be too bone lazy to lock 'em up at night—make no mistake. Away with you and be minding your own business the same as I minds mine. Really, I don't know what—' But the parson was already some way up the garden-path that led from the cottage to the road, with the terrier snapping about his heels.

WHEN the hounds passed Far Hill Cottage on their way to draw the Salop Wood a week later, Nancy Briggs stood at her gate with her arms folded across her chest and her elbows sticking out menacingly. When the Master bade her a polite, if not slightly emphatic, 'Good-morning to you, Mrs Briggs,' she simply glared at him fit to kill. The young whipper-in, safe this time on horseback, waved at her maliciously and asked her why she didn't come to see the sport. 'Because Nancy Briggs isn't so crazy as some think,' she retorted promptly, 'nor by half as crazy as some look, all dressed up a-chasing poor foxes over other people's land.'

It was that afternoon that Nancy went out with her high-wheeled cradle-like pram to gather some firing from a rough hedge-bottom that skirted a spinney near her cottage. Presently an old dog-fox came, tired and panting, along the road. At its last gasp as it was, almost any place would have been a haven of refuge to the beast and, seeing the pram only half-filled, it jumped in and crouched down.

The slightest flicker of a smile stole round Mrs Briggs's mouth and, taking in the situation at a glance, she hastily put some brashy hedge-trimmings over the fox. Then with her chin in the air she trundled the pram away towards the cottage as innocently as could be, with the hounds in full cry not fifty yards away.

For several days afterwards the sudden disappearance of the fox was the talk of the pub. As if by magic a hot scent and trail had disappeared and there had been no fox-earth within a mile of the place. It seemed as if the fox had taken to wing—been witched away.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

NANCY BRIGGS put the old pram into the outhouse, where it served well enough as a temporary kennel for the fox. That night the tired beast slept the sleep of exhaustion, with its brush curled snugly around its body. Next morning Nancy went to the village with her shopping-basket, for she intended to give the fox a good feed before she turned it out again.

She entered the butcher's shop in her usual abrupt and unfriendly manner and asked for four pennyworth of veal bones—they would be tasty and not too strong for the old fox's teeth. Butcher Buse served her, and she departed without a word, with her chin held high and one hand clasping her skirts as if afraid of contact with the sawdust floor.

After the fox had eaten and crushed each bone ravenously, it walked around the outhouse, inspecting its new home—sniffing here and there and nosing interestedly at a mouse-hole under the brick boiler. But it was still flecked with mud and pad-sore. Nancy could see the fox dragged its brush and that it went stiff in its hindquarters. After a while, seemingly satisfied with its surroundings, the fox leapt back into the pram as if it were the natural thing to do, resting its nose contentedly between its forepads.

'I'm blessed if I won't have to keep him for a day or two,' said Nancy to her cats. 'I don't know what things . . .'

When she appeared again at the butcher's the very next morning and repeated the order of the day before, Butcher Buse raised his eyebrows: 'Got another dog, Mrs Briggs?' he asked.

'No, I ain't,' answered Nancy, almost snapping at the bones handed to her. 'And I'll be asking you to mind your own business. If a woman can't buy some bones without being—being gestapoed—well, I don't know—to be sure, I don't.'

Butcher Buse took no notice. Together with the rest of the village he knew Old Nancy and with the rest he thought her odd. She grew more like a witch every time she came into the shop, but it was none of his business if she bought all the bones he had.

FOR a week Nancy fed and cared for the fox, and then when it seemed strong again and its russet coat had recovered its bloom, she decided that it must go. One night she put the animal in the pram and covered it

over with a sack, tying the lot down with bagging string. Then she sallied forth, this time in the direction of the lonely Salop Wood, a mile or so distant to the north of the cottage.

It would have been a strange sight for anyone to see on that cold dark night. For the fox soon tired of the covering and poked its head out from beneath. The tale of Nancy Briggs with a fox in a pram trundling along the road at near midnight would have added considerably to her 'odd' reputation had it been told in the village. But Nancy did not pass a living soul that night and the only witness of the scene, as she let the fox out in the heart of the wood, was the man-in-the-moon as he peered down through the treetops.

Afterwards, Nancy pursued the uneven tenor of her ways, minding her own business in the manner of a hen pecking corn. She had plenty to keep her busy in the cottage and looking after her pets. The episode of the fox that vanished was only a nine-day wonder in the village and soon it faded in the widow's mind.

WHEN Nancy Briggs went into her outhouse one morning about five weeks later her sharp ears picked up a rustling sound. 'A rat, I'll be bound,' she muttered angrily, and called her terrier Tim. But the dog was slumbering in a patch of wintry sunshine in the front porch of the cottage and pretended not to hear his mistress's voice. It was then that an unmistakable odour came to her, and Nancy peered into the darkest corner of the shed, where the old pram was wedged between the mangle and the wheelbarrow. Peeping out from the pram, with a grin splitting its mask from ear to ear, was the old fox. She continued to stare for a moment and her hand crept up to cover her heart—a compassionate one for all her outward show of cold aggression. Leaving the shed, she turned towards the cottage, muttering the fateful words that came to her aid almost hourly. In a moment or two she had tied up the terrier and given a saucer of milk each to the two cats. Then putting on her bonnet, black coat, and feather boa, and hanging a basket over the crook of her arm, she hastened down the hill to the village.

Nancy Briggs entered the butcher's shop and once more asked for veal bones. Butcher

MILK SUPPLY AND THE PUBLIC ANALYST

Buse raised his eyebrows, but this time held his tongue except for asking: 'Four penny-worth same as before, Mrs Briggs?'

'And make it snappy,' answered Mrs Briggs in her usual tone.

The butcher wrapped up the bones and placed them with one hand in the outstretched basket, palming eight halfpennies with the other.

He watched Nancy Briggs make for the door, expecting to see her trip away up the road with her chin in the air and without

another word. But at the exit she turned, and, with a smile spreading slowly across her thin face and lighting her eyes with a friendliness he had never seen there before, she said: 'Thank you, Mr Buse.' And then, still smiling, she muttered, as if enjoying the joke against herself: 'I don't know what things be coming to, I'm sure.'

Butcher Buse raised his eyebrows higher than ever and with a porky finger scratched the back of his rubicund neck where it bulged above the collar. Neither did he.

Milk Supply and the Public Analyst

M. J. ROBB, B.Sc., F.R.I.C.

THE problem of deciding whether a formal sample of milk drawn complies with the minimum legal limits for milk-fat and solids-not-fat falls to the lot of the public analyst, except in rare cases where there is disagreement between him and another analyst who receives one of the triplicate portions of the original sample retained for such an eventual-ity. If the two certificates produced in Court are not in satisfactory agreement, the Court may then order that the third sample be sent to the Government chemist, who is the final referee.

Samples of milk may be drawn after complaints are received and are also, of course, examined as a major part of the work of analysts under the Food and Drugs Act. When a particular sample is found to be unsatisfactory from the chemical standpoint, officials draw informal samples, and quite a number of such tests may be made. The public analyst does everything he can to investigate a deficiency, and a case leads to prosecution only when his results justify such a course. Unless there is ample evidence of skimming off fat, a proportion of fat below the presumptive limit of 3 per cent seldom leads to the Courts, while

slight deficiencies in both fat and non-fatty solids may be followed by merely a warning or cautionary note to the seller. In the great majority of cases presented both ingredients are below the presumptive limits, that for solids-not-fat being 8.5 per cent.

IT is obvious that a milk having a high fat-content, and also rich in other solids, such as lactose and protein, can have water added without bringing the proportions below the legal limits. In the past, analysts have had reason to suspect watering, but for a good many years now the presence of such adulteration has been detected by the freezing-point test, which came into use in the early 'thirties of this century, except for parts of the north of Scotland. The generally accepted freezing-point for genuine milk is now minus .530 degrees Centigrade. It may be, as a rather remote possibility, that herds exist which give a bulked milk having a freezing-point nearer zero than that figure, but so much investigation has been made that the incidence of this must be extremely rare. The addition of water to milk naturally brings its freezing-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

point nearer 0 degrees Centigrade, that of pure water.

Analysts use the freezing-point test with discretion, and the limit accepted does not make any appreciable difference in cases likely to lead to a Court. The test has avoided unjust prosecution of vendors of milk of naturally poor quality either from inheritance or from seasonal variation. In addition, it has avoided protracted legal hearings involving much expense. Disadvantages of the freezing-point test are that the figure is affected by souring which develops acidity and that it is not capable of detecting dilution by very slight leaks of water from coolers or by water left in vessels after washing or steaming.

Most analysts are of opinion that feeding has not an important effect on the quality of milk, although they fully recognise seasonal variations. For instance, the milk of certain breeds, such as Friesian, giving a high yield, may be deficient in solids-not-fat for several weeks of the year.

DATA for the work of public analysts, giving the proportion of milk samples examined and found to be adulterated, are given in the annual reports of the Ministry of Health. The subject is dealt with in more detail by the analysts in their annual reports to authorities. From that source the position in one of the large Midland cities of England may be cited. During the year 1950, 2813 samples of milk were analysed, of which 60 were drawn as formal samples in connection with the procedure of the Food and Drugs Act. The percentage of adulteration was 9, compared with just over 10 for the period from 1945 to 1950 inclusive, and 11.3 in 1953. During 1950, only five prosecutions were brought forward in connection with cases involving the drawing of 42 informal and formal samples. The fines imposed in these cases varied from £1 to £10, the latter sum in four cases in which the added water in the most serious had caused a deficiency of about one-third in the proportions of both fat and non-fatty solids. In addition to these milks, 210 samples from 117 producers were found to be either deficient in solids-not-fat or in both solids and fat, and 77 were deficient in fat only. The same year 74 vendors were cautioned in connection with the sale of 141 samples, while administrative action was not taken in respect of 44 samples.

Apart from the 42 samples mentioned

above, only 9 others had been watered, and in these cases it was probable that either accident or carelessness was responsible for the small amounts of added water found to be present. It will be noted from the above that public analysts make full investigation of all cases of deficiency and that milk producers or vendors receive fair and just treatment.

The Appeal to the Cow test, which follows the analysis of a sample of milk found to be deficient, involves the drawing of possibly a series of samples in the presence of the officials concerned with milk supply. The results of analysis of these milks, if necessary that of each cow in a herd, determine whether or not a prosecution under the regulations will follow. The method is not considered to be entirely satisfactory, although the procedure has proved to be very valuable to the milk industry throughout the country. In the past, attempts have been made to add water to the milk out of view of the sampler, and some of the tricks practised in the dim light of early morning were not without ingenuity. In the event of an absolute standard for milk being set up, which some analysts would prefer, the Appeal to the Cow test would lapse. The difficulty is to find standards for fat and non-fatty solids satisfactory for general purposes. There is a wide difference between the quality of the milk of, say, Guernsey and Friesian cattle in spring.

It should be pointed out in conclusion that in this country there is at present no legal definition of milk at all. In the United States it is required to be the fresh clean lacteal secretion of one or more healthy cows properly fed and kept. The final part of this description has a bearing on the freezing-point test for added water, which the deliberate control of or defects in the watering of cattle may affect. In two cases where water was available only in the morning there was an excessive secretion of it in the afternoon milk and a reduction in the freezing-point depression and proportion of solids-not-fat. On the other hand, the morning milk depressions were greater than usual. In a few cases found during winter feeding, water was withheld from cows for a period of some seventeen hours, but when it is freely available or is given after each milking there is no upset to the metabolism of the animals. In general milk consumers get supplies of better quality than the minima prescribed. For instance, in one large English city the average quality is about 3.6 per cent of fat and 8.7 per cent of solids-not-fat.

Science at Your Service

ROT-PROOFING SACKS

AN improved tar by-product has emerged from one of the modern processes for manufacturing smokeless fuels. In this process the temperature of carbonisation is controlled within a narrow range and the retort is internally heated, which minimises the time-period of carbonisation. As one result, the tar products that are removed are carried away from the coal surfaces exceptionally quickly. It has been found that tar distilled in this way is much richer in resins and waxes, there having been less chemical change in natural coal-tar constituents during the carbonisation. Research has now shown that this type of coal-tar is superior to the imported pinewood tars mainly used for rot-proofing hemp and jute products—e.g. sacks, ropes, etc.; as well, it is about half the price. It kills both soil-borne and air-borne bacteria, and in time it appears to increase the tensile strength of the treated fibres; this latter effect is said to be due to the gradual formation of polymers (larger molecules) in the tar film.

It remains to be seen how far the new home-produced product can invade an important industrial field long dominated by imported pinewood tar products. The progress already made experimentally shows that coal is still a most versatile storehouse of chemical substances and that our methods of coal treatment have by no means reached their peak of extractive efficiency.

STRONGER HAMMERS AND HATCHETS

A claw-hammer and a hatchet both of particularly strong construction are being offered by well-known toolmakers. Each tool is solid-forged from one piece of steel from the head to the end of the handle; the hickory grip is attached by riveting to the shank at about a midway position between head and handle-end. It seems certain that this method of construction completely obviates the old and frequent fault of loosening heads to which hammers and hatchets are especially liable.

A WINE-COOLER

A much-used Continental device for cooling single bottles of wine is now available in this country. It can also be used for cooling bottles of milk or any other fluid. It consists of a plastics-made and cup-shaped container that is placed upon the neck of the bottle; the bottle is then stood under a gently-running cold-water tap. The series of holes in the bottom of the attachment direct a curtain of water down and over the sides of the bottle, and the bottle's contents are much more speedily and evenly cooled than is possible with a single stream of water giving non-uniform coverage.

EASING THE WASH

No one can deny that constant attention is given to-day to easing the burden of the household wash, no longer to be accepted as an inevitably cumbersome and uncomfortable chore of the housewife's life. A new accessory device is a carrier, which is virtually a canvas cradle on a light tubular metal frame. In this the whole wash can be placed before and after rinsing, carried to and from the clothes-line, taken to the ironing-board, and later to the airing-cupboard. The canvas cradle is itself detachable and washable. There is a separate pocket for pegs. The tubular frame, of use as a clothes airer when the canvas cradle is detached, provides crossed-legs, so that the carrier stands firmly when being loaded or unloaded. It is 34 inches high, 20 inches long, and just over 16 inches wide. The price is moderate.

A GARDEN SWEEPER

A mechanical sweeper for the garden is a new British appliance. It can clear lawns of leaves, worm-casts, or cuttings if a mower without a box has been used; also, it can be used for sweeping drives, paths, or yards. The width of sweep is 2 feet; a revolving bristle brush is height-adjustable in the same way that the revolving blades of a mower are adjustable. The brush is carried in a tubular frame moving on two rubber-tyred wheels;

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the frame also carries a collecting-bag with a metal base and canvas sides. On the underside of the base there are two wooden runners. The wheels and runners enable the sweeper to be efficiently and easily operated at ordinary walking-pace. For its size, the appliance is light in weight—45 pounds. An attractive subsidiary feature is that the sweeper, when not in use, can be hung on the wall of a shed or garage; the use of canvas for the sides of the collecting-bag enables it to take a flat shape.

A POCKET-SIZE RECORDING-MACHINE

A magnetic tape-recorder of pocket-size—slightly less in dimensions than 7 by 4½ by 1½ inches, or about the size of a box of 100 cigarettes—is capable of recording up to two and a half hours of continuous conversation or dictation. The recorder in its plastics case can be kept in the pocket and the microphone held in the hand or hung from a lapel. Perhaps the social implications of this new appliance are somewhat dangerous; however, it is not an inexpensive item and its uses are likely to be wholly confined to business or other serious purposes. As a readily-portable instrument, it obviously has many potentialities at conferences or meetings when one of the larger dictating- or recording-machines is not to hand, or as the traveller's *vade-mecum*. The recorded spools have an indefinitely long life, can be stored and played back as often as required, or can be erased and reused for further recording. The playing-back is through headphones or through an ordinary radio receiver or any external amplifier. The power for the recording motor is supplied by a 12-volt dry battery; an auxiliary transformer is available for operating from 110/220 A.C. supply. Wrist-attached or throat microphones are also available as accessories.

AN IMPROVED IRONING-BOARD

A well-known ironing-board has been improved by giving the board-surface underneath its normal covering a heat-reflecting surface. It is claimed that this enables a smooth finish to be produced on both sides of any garment in the same ironing operation, thus saving much of the time normally devoted to this household task. The ironing-board is available in three sizes as a standard model and in two as a *de luxe* model. It is made in polished hardwoods, is collapsible, and can be readily adjusted for height.

BETTER CURTAIN-RAILS

A new curtain-rail on the market offers some interesting advantages. The material of which the rail is made is described as a new and special compound, and it can be bent by hand to right angles without any risk of breaking. It is rust-proof and corrosion-proof. Although the rail is very light, it is claimed that it never sags and can carry the heaviest curtains. The gliders are made of pure nylon and in operation are practically noiseless; any angle or curve can be traversed without a tendency for dragging. The rail and associated fittings are cream-coloured, so that any colour-scheme can be safely matched. The rail is sold in standard stock lengths of 3 to 14 feet, rising by 6-inch intervals. The price per foot, which includes brackets, gliders, end-stops, and fixing-screws, is reasonable.

AN IMPROVED PAPERHANGING ADHESIVE

In the past few years there have been many advances in the adhesives field, and an unprecedented variety of materials competes to-day for the job of sticking things together. However, one of the most awkward and commonplace jobs involving sticking—the hanging of wallpaper—has not been appreciably changed; it has kept to its tradition of simple paste. A new British-made adhesive is seeking to revolutionise this field. It is offered in small packets, the contents of which make up 1½ gallons of adhesive, sufficient for papering the average-sized room. It is instantly soluble in cold water. It is claimed that it cannot discolour even the most delicate pattern; surplus adhesive can be brushed off without leaving any mark. It has no odour and keeps indefinitely. Wallpaper-piece joins are claimed to be indiscernible if the adhesive is generously applied at these paper junctions.

The adhesive forms an elastic cellulose film to bind the paper and the wall surface, and this film can accommodate the expansions and contractions of the paper caused by changes in humidity or temperature. The blemishes of curling or peeling away at window and fireplace boundaries are said to be obviated. The new adhesive is slightly more expensive than most traditional wallpaper pastes, but the extra cost involved per room is quite small in relation to other wallpapering costs. To the huge number of householders who to-day do as much as possible of their own decorative work the new product would seem to be well worth investigation.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

NEW FOOD PRESERVATIVES

Fats and food products containing fats or oils can often go off by developing rancid flavours, and this is due to oxidation. The problem is one of growing seriousness, the shelf-life of packed foods being limited in many cases by this risk of oxidation. The spices that are traditionally and heavily used in the hotter countries of the East in many cases function as oxidation-suppressing substances. They are natural antioxidants. Another natural substance with some capacity to suppress fat oxidation is ascorbic acid or vitamin C. However, chemical substances that are very effective antioxidants have been known for some years, but their use in this country has not been permitted. At any rate, the legal position has been undefined, for, while there is no prohibitive law dealing specifically with antioxidants, the general law concerning preservatives could be applied. A special technical committee set up by the Ministry of Food has now recommended that four chemical antioxidants, all of them already used in several other countries, should be allowed to be used here provided that rates of addition do not exceed certain maximum limits. They can be added only to edible oils and fats, including margarine but excluding butter, or to essential oils; they cannot be added to food preparations except to the extent that they may already be incorporated in the oils or fats used as raw materials. At present the report is merely a recommendation; in time it will no doubt be implemented by special legislation. It will remove what is at present something of an anomaly, for food products imported from countries where these antioxidants may be used frequently contain them; so they are consumed by the public here although the British food manufacturer has not been able to use them in his own products. For chemically-minded readers, the antioxidants recommended are propyl gallate, octyl gallate, dodecyl gallate, and butylated hydroxyanisole. Their use in other countries has not been accompanied by any ill-effects; and they have enabled a good deal of food wastage to be avoided.

UNPICKABLE LOCKS?

A company originally producing aircraft locks has developed a new type of office, factory, or household lock. It is claimed that the security given has never been surpassed. The claw deadbolt resists forcing and the lock is steel-enclosed to prevent drilling. Ten levers operative in the key mechanism ensure that lock-picking is virtually impossible. An exclusive key-combination is associated with every lock, and keys may be registered with the manufacturing company to prevent unauthorised duplication. Nevertheless, a building completely fitted with these locks, no matter how many are involved, can be controlled by one master-key; one authorised person in an organisation, therefore, need carry only one key to give him access to all locks. All key records held by the manufacturers are kept in a fireproof strong-room.

Various models of these locks are available, including an all-steel padlock and a small window-lock that secures the window to its frame and acts independently of the window lever or handle. The last-mentioned type of lock, however, cannot be master-keyed.

A LOW-STANDING DOMESTIC STOVE

The heating-appliance market to-day is dominated by variety of design, and many equally efficient stoves display differences that are mainly æsthetic. A recently-introduced stove has a difference that will be particularly important in some houses. It is squat in shape, being wider than it is high, and this enables it to be installed in fireplaces of abnormally low design. The height of the stove is slightly under 20 inches; the depth from front to back is slightly under 14 inches. Radiant and convected heat are emitted, and it is claimed to be suitable for heating rooms of between 1500 and 3000 cubic feet capacity. The finish is in vitreous enamel, and beige, fawn, or black models are available. There is a double-door with mica panels; a shaking bottom grate that can be operated from outside; spinwheel air-control; and a mild-steel ashpans. A steady-burning period of 10 hours without fuel attention is claimed.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Buying Your Vegetable Seeds

IN their seed-buying, gardeners can be divided into two groups—the improvident and the over-provident. The improvident order too many seeds. They are constantly scared of being short. The over-provident order too few. They are always frightened of having an eighth of an ounce over, and so they tend to underestimate. Further, at the beginning of the year they never order all the seeds that are required in the garden, and so, later on, they have to send off a rush order.

The successful man, of course, steers between the two big groups. He works out very carefully on paper his cropping scheme for the year. He then knows exactly how many rows of carrots, of parsnips, of peas and beans, and of brassicas he is going to have, and in consequence it does not take him long to work out how much seed he ought to buy. In my own work our general rule is to order half-a-pint of any type of pea or bean seed for every 50 foot of row that is going to be sown. This is a generous estimate.

In the case of potatoes, we plant per 50 foot row 10 lb. of a very early variety like Ninety-fold or May Queen and 7 lb. of the second earlies and main crop. The same rule holds good for the Jerusalem artichoke. With all the brassicas or greens, a quarter of an ounce of seed is ample to produce 500 good plants, especially if you sow in a prepared bed which resembles the John Innes seed-compost. In fact, you add some sedge-peat to the soil, some sand, plus superphosphate and hydrated lime at 3 ounces to the square yard.

For the onions, a quarter of an ounce of seed is sufficient for 50 feet, except in the case of the pickling varieties and salad kinds, when half-an-ounce is necessary. For the root-crops, like carrots, beet, and parsnips, a quarter of an ounce will do, and this quantity is sufficient for chicory, spinach-beet, seakale-spinach, lettuce, and endive. With corn-salad and radish, and for both the winter and summer spinach, half-an-ounce is usually sown.

Having dealt with the quantity, we ought seriously to discuss varieties, and, now that the catalogues have come, we can go through them very carefully and choose the best varieties.

Let us start with peas. I am very taken with Kelvedon varieties. There is the second early Kelvedon Monarch, which has the most beautiful deep-green pods and foliage, and the second early Kelvedon Triumph. Others are Prize Winner, Foremost, and that early main-crop, Onward.

With broad-beans grow the Select Aquadulce; with French-beans for early work, The Prince, and for a late sowing, The Wonder; for runners, I can well recommend Goliath and Streamline. For round beet grow Empire Globe; for long, Cheltenham Green Top Selected; and as a half-long or intermediate, Obelisk. The Cambridge varieties, No. 1, No. 3, and No. 5, are still the best Brussels sprouts, while for spring cabbage there is little to beat First Early 218, followed by Primo, then Greyhound, next Winnigstadt, and, last, January King.

The James's Scarlet Intermediate is a grand maincrop carrot, and Early Market is good for sowing in February: it is a stump-rooted variety. Do try the Cambridge Earliest No. 5 cauliflower as well as the Cambridge No. 7 and Cambridge No. 6. Clandon White is a fine-flavoured celery. Outside, there is nothing to beat the Hampshire Giant cucumber, but, in the frame, grow Conqueror. Musselburgh is a splendid strain of leek, while if you go in for exhibition at all, try instead the Lyon Prize-taker. In the case of lettuce, you may need Borough Wonder to sow in February or March, Webb's Wonderful to sow in April or May, and Arctic King to sow in August or September. In the greenhouse, of course, you will grow Cheshunt Early Giant.

If you grow sweet-corn, then plant the Canada Cross, while many of you who do well with melons under cloches will want to grow Dutch Net and Tiger, both of which crop heavily. A good selection of Ailsa Craig onion ensures a large-type bulb, but many favour the firm bulbs of Bedfordshire Champion.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

Printed in Great Britain by T. & A. CONSTABLE LTD., Edinburgh.

Published by W. & B. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2, and 6 Dean Street, London, W.1.

New Novel by
**MAURICE
 WALSH**

A
*Strange Woman's
 Daughter*

MAURICE WALSH has here created many lovable people one side and another of the thin partition of the mind, and gives his admirers a book of startling new fascinations.

7s. 6d. net
CHAMBERS

BLADDER WEAKNESS

ABSORBENT BAGS

Male day pattern, 38/6
 New Model Female day pattern, 50/-

"DUPLEX" BAGS

Male, day and night, 70/-

Our bags catch all leakage, easing mind and body. Invisible under clothing and easily emptied. Now worn world wide. Special patterns for motorists and aviators.

Diagrams, etc., on request from:

HILLIARD
 123 DOUGLAS STREET : GLASGOW, C.2

'MY DEAR! I sent my old fur coat to

FERGUSON'S

and got the most marvellous renovation; you simply wouldn't know it from a new one, and the price was really moderate.'
 Own material also made up from 8 gns. into Suits, Coats, Costumes, Etc.

90/94 EASTER ROAD, EDINBURGH, 7

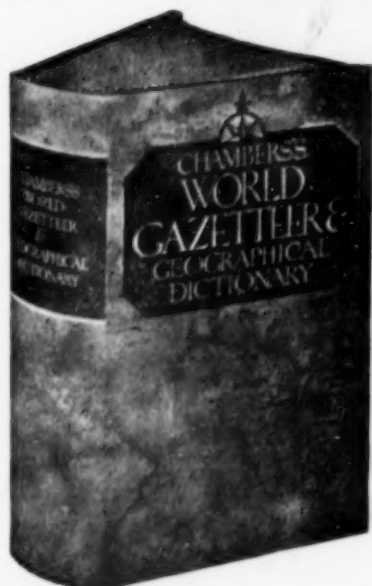
Early Closing—Tuesday, 1 p.m.

Tel. ABB 4055

Est. 1897

That Book Token?

WE suggest the fine leather-backed edition of **CHAMBERS'S TWENTIETH CENTURY DICTIONARY.** 30s. net



CHAMBERS'S



**GAZETTEER
 AND GEOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY**

THIS new volume, which is now on the bookstalls, is the first major work of its kind to be published in Britain since the war.

An all-purpose geographical 'companion.' A world directory. An invaluable reference work. Eight hundred pages. 30s. net.

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 THISTLE STREET, EDINBURGH 2

MACVITA

(REGD)

THE PERFECT FOOD

Per 1¹/₂ PACKET

(NET WEIGHT 8 oz.)

A delicious
change
from Bread

Crisp and Creamy—Unsweetened

Try it with butter, marmalade, cheese, etc.